Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

12

勝木光

KCM4283
KC
講談社

Baby Steps
12
勝木光

9784063842838
1929979004194

雑誌 42270-83

ISBN978-4-06-384283-8

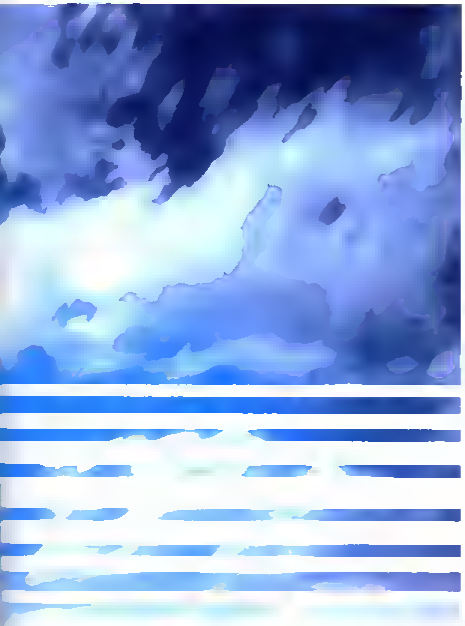
C9979 ¥419E（0）

講談社
定価：本体419円（税別）

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

KC 勝木 光 作品

ベイビーステップ 1～以下続刊



Cover Design／Veia

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KC

試合を描く時は、つい負けてる方を
応援したくなってしまうので、
冷静さが必要です。
・・が、冷静になりすぎると
淡々としてしまうので、
冷静と情熱の間を行ったり来たりします。

勝木 光

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

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KC MAGAZINE

ベイビーステップ 12 勝木光

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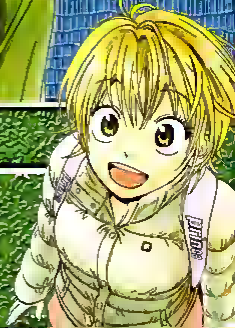

Baby

ベイビー

12

勝木 光（かつき ひかる）

Baby ステップ

人物紹介

エーちゃん
丸尾栄一郎

STC所属。「次の全日本ジュニアで優勝、そしてプロへ」を命題に、テニス真っ只中。フロリダへの短期テニス留学も経験し、一回り成長!! 同じ夢を持つナツは心の支え。友達以上恋人未満の関係に進展は!?

青井コーチ

STCでのエーちゃんのコーチ。元プロ選手という経験に裏付けされた指導でエーちゃんをサポート。

ナツ
鷹崎奈津

STC所属。関東にほぼ敵なしの実力を持ち、プロが目標。理論派・エーちゃんとは真逆の超感覚派で、それが互いの刺激に。エーちゃんの一番身近にいる女の子。

佐々木姫子

エーちゃんのクラスメイトで、試合には必ず応援に来てくれる心強い応援団。

影山小次郎

大目標「全日本ジュニア」につながる第一歩

神奈川県ジュニアテニス大会

ついに始まる!!

2回戦 対戦相手は宮川に決定!!

1回戦 エーちゃんVS.西村浩司

Win

関東ジュニア進出が懸かった大一番!!

今大会の第1シード 荒谷貴寛

エーちゃんが勝ち進めば、対決は避けられない!

ライバルは、神奈川だけでなく全国に!

難波江優
木得意が少なくて、データ重視のプレーヤー。完敗を喫したエーちゃんにとって眼前の壁。二人が次に対戦するのは、関東ジュニアか!?

井出義明
片倒的な精神力

神田久志
俊足が生むライジング

岡田隆行
破壊力タップのライジング

Baby Steps

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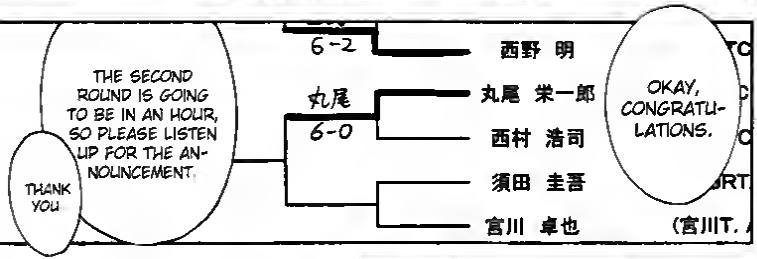
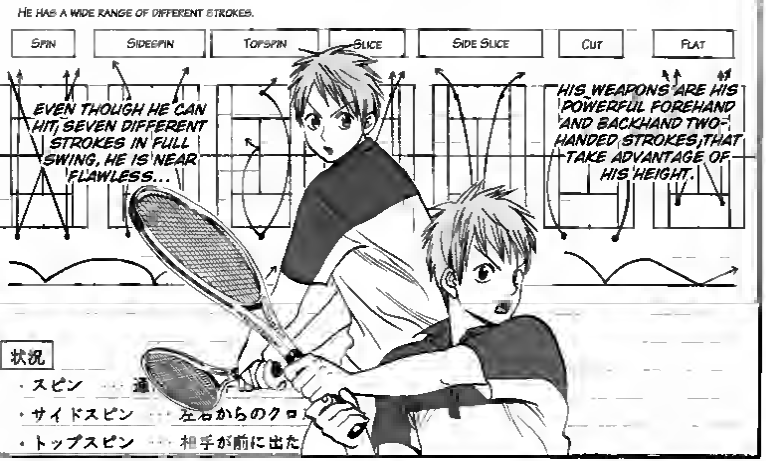
#111: FEAR
#112: MATCH-UP?
SPECIAL CHAPTER

to Giant Strides

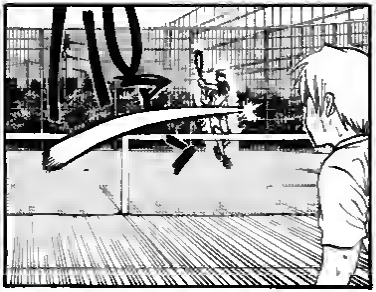
#104 CRITICAL BATTLE



LOVE - 30
ACCORDING TO THE DATA A YEAR AGO...
WOW!! AS EXPECTED OF THE STROKE DEMON!!


HE HAS A WIDE RANGE OF DIFFERENT STROKES.
SPIN
SIDESPIN
TOPSPIN
SLICE
SIDE SLICE
CUT
FLAT
EVEN THOUGH HE CAN HIT SEVEN DIFFERENT STROKES IN FULL SWING, HE IS NEAR FLAWLESS...
HIS WEAPONS ARE HIS POWERFUL FOREHAND AND BACKHAND TWO-HANDED STROKES, THAT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS HEIGHT.
状況
・スピン ・・・
・サイドスピン ・・・左右からのクロ
・トップスピン ・・・相手が前に出た

I'M OFF THE SLUMP.
MOREOVER, HE MUST'VE GAINED SOMETHING BY OVERCOMING HIS RECENT SLUMP...



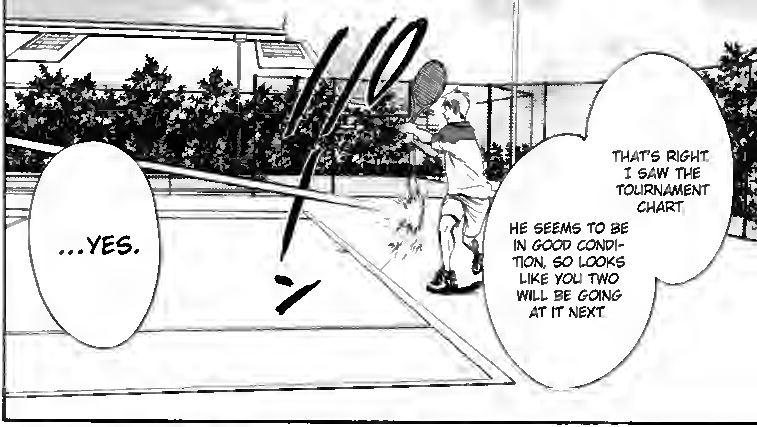
ALTHOUGH, I CAN TELL THAT HIS STROKES HAVE GOTTEN A LOT SHARPER.
I DON'T SEE ANY BIG CHANGES YET

LOVE - 40

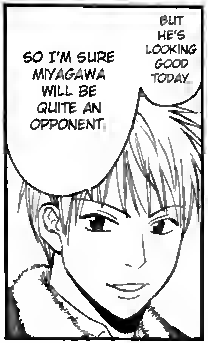
ACCORDING TO YUKICHI-KUN...

MIYAGAWA-KUN WAS A BIT INEPT, SO HE ABANDONED VOLLEYS AND ATTACKED SOLELY FROM THE BACK

AH, HELLO, OOBAYASHI-KUN!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE. HOW'RE YOU DOING?
HEY, MARUO-KUN
I'M SET FOR COLLEGE TOO, SO I HAVE TONS OF FREE TIME RIGHT NOW.
IT MUST'VE BEEN TOUGH WITH EXAMS.
WELL, EVEN FOR EXAMS, IT WAS MORE OF A SPORTS RECOMMEN-DATION.
YUP, YUP AND THERE ARE OTHER JUNIORS OF MINE, TOO. LIKE MOGAMI.
The person Ei-chan fought for the first time.
Who?
ARE YOU HERE FOR MIYAGAWA-KUN?
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT.
I WAS PRETTY WORRIED ABOUT MY FUTURE DURING THIS TIME LAST YEAR, BUT I THINK THIS IS IT FOR ME.
I SOMEHOW MANAGED TO GET INTO A COLLEGE WITH A DIVISION I TENNIS TEAM. SO, I CAN AIM FOR THE INTER-COLLEGIATE.


...YES.
THAT'S RIGHT. I SAW THE TOURNAMENT CHART.
HE SEEMS TO BE IN GOOD CONDITION, SO LOOKS LIKE YOU TWO WILL BE GOING AT IT NEXT.

!?


SO I'M SURE MIYAGAWA WILL BE QUITE AN OPPONENT.
BUT HE'S LOOKING GOOD TODAY.

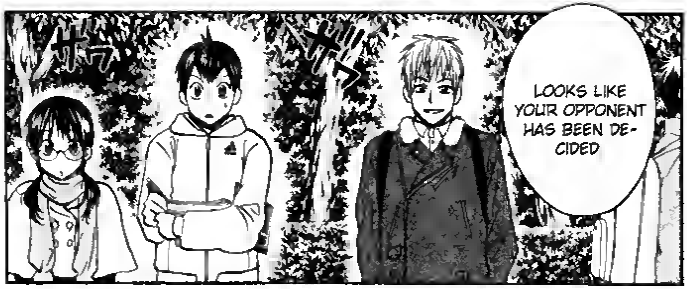
HE WAS REALLY SAD WHEN HE LOST TO YOU LAST YEAR.
I BETTER GIVE ALL MY SUPPORT TO MIYAGAWA THIS YEAR.
NO, NO THAT WAS MORE OF A MIRACLE

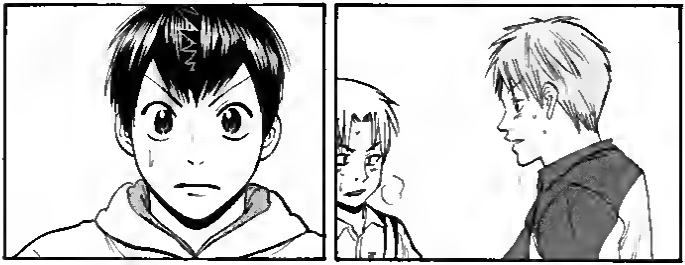
IT'LL START AFFECTING HIS CAREER, TOO.
BUT IF HE CAN'T ADVANCE TO KANTO HERE,
IT IS TRUE THAT HE GOT HIMSELF OUT OF A SLUMP,

CAREER ...?
OF COURSE HE'S A 2ND YEAR IN HIGH SCHOOL ALREADY.
YOU USUALLY HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION AROUND THAT AGE, RIGHT?
WHETHER YOU MOVE ON TO BE A PRO, PUT IT ON HOLD AND STUDY FOR COLLEGE, OR GIVE UP ON BECOMING A PRO,
IT'S PRETTY MUCH THE SAME FOR ANYONE AIMING FOR BEST IN THE PREFECTURE.
THAT'S ESPECIALLY TRUE FOR THIS PREFECTURE JUNIOR THAT'S CONNECTED TO ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR.
SINCE EVERYONE'S IN IT, YOU CAN PROPERLY GAUGE WHERE YOU STAND AMONGST YOUR AGE GROUP.
SINCE THERE'S ALSO MEDIA AND SPONSOR ATTENTION, THE RESULT CAN HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON YOUR FUTURE.
ANYWAY, EVERYONE'S PRETTY DESPERATE.
MIYAGAWA'S NO EXCEPTION
THAT'S WHY THIS TIME...

HE'LL COME AT YOU WITH HIS WHOLE BEING.
HA!
adidas

GAME SET AND MATCH. WON BY MIYAGAWA. COUNT: 6-0


LOOKS LIKE YOUR OPPONENT HAS BEEN DECIDED



DON'T LET MY BODY COOL DOWN BEFORE 2ND ROUND, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE ME TIRED ..
ME TOO... IF I LOSE HERE, I HAVE TO GIVE UP ON BECOMING PRO.
だからお願いします!!
1年間テニスだけやらせてください!!

FROM HERE ON OUT,
EVERYONE FIGHTS WITH THEIR FUTURE AT STAKE.
WAS THIS HOW ARAYA-KUN FELT WHEN HE WENT AGAINST TAKUMA-SAN LAST YEAR?
FOR THE SAKE OF WINNING SUCH BATTLES?
HAVEN'T I BEEN WORK-- ING SO HARD
HEY THERE!

Y-YES?
YOU'RE PUTTING ON A PRETTY MEAN FACE.
NO MATTER HOW SCARY YOU TRY TO LOOK, IT'S NOT GONNA BE ENOUGH TO SCARE OFF YOUR OPPONENT, YOU KNOW?
FAT'S NAW WHA OM FWYIN FU TU!
(That's not what I'm trying to do!)
LISTEN. EVERYONE GETS A LITTLE NERVOUS BEFORE THESE SORTS OF MATCHES
Ouch
BUT, REMEMBER THAT THE ONE WHO'S ENJOYING THE MOST ALWAYS TURN OUT TO BE THE WINNER.
ALSO... MIRACLE OR NOT, YOU MANAGED TO BEAT MIYAGAWA ONCE BEFORE YOU MET ME.
REMEMBER HOW HARD YOU'VE BEEN WORKING EVER SINCE YOU MET ME.
IF YOU THINK LOGICALLY, THERE'S NO WAY YOU'D LOSE.

NO. 45, MARUO-KUN. NO. 48 MIYAGAWA-KUN.
PLEASE PROCEED TO COURT 10 AND BEGIN YOUR MATCH.
IT'S FINALLY TIME.
GET OUT THERE AND WIN, EI-CHAN.
YEAH

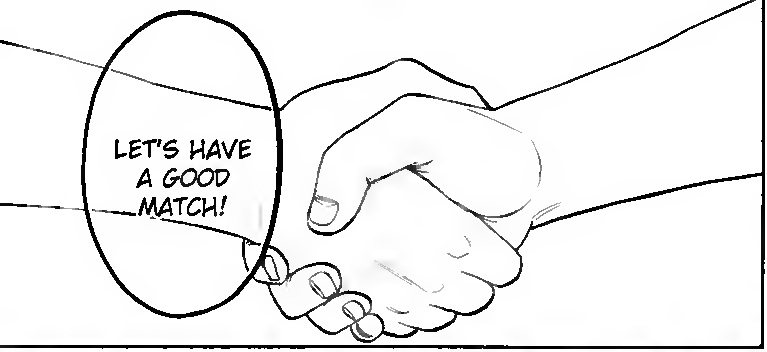
YES SIR!!
C'MON! GO GET YOUR TICKET TO KANTO!!

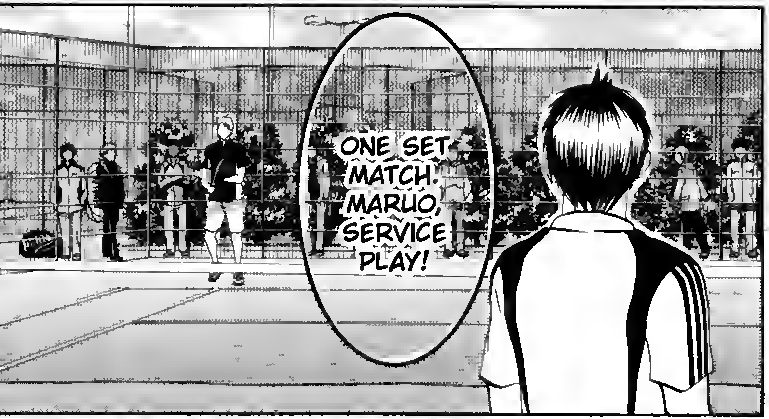
WINNERS OF THE FIRST ROUND, PLEASE REPORT YOUR RESULTS TO THE MAIN OFFICE.
NO. 64, MOGAMI-KUN. NO. 62, ISHII-KUN. PLEASE WAIT IN COURT 4.
NO. 49, FUKAZAWA-KUN. YOUR NEXT MATCH FOR ROUND 2 WILL BE ON COURT 2.

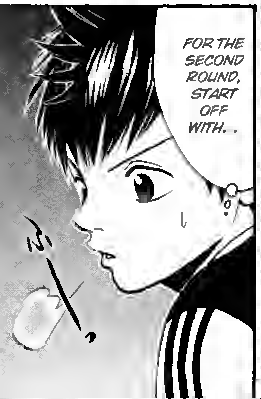
PLAYERS IN THE SECOND ROUND, PLEASE ARRIVE AT YOUR RESPECTIVE COURTS ON TI..
1/10
!
ン

I'LL BE GETTING MY REVENGE TODAY.

I... I WON'T LOSE.


LET'S HAVE A GOOD MATCH!


ONE SET MATCH. MARUO, SERVICE PLAY!


FOR THE SECOND ROUND, START OFF WITH. . .

IF I PROCEED TOO CAUTIOUSLY, I'LL BE CORNERED AGAINST THAT STROKE.
MY OPPONENT'S LEVEL IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE FIRST ROUND. . .

ENGINE AT MAX POWER!

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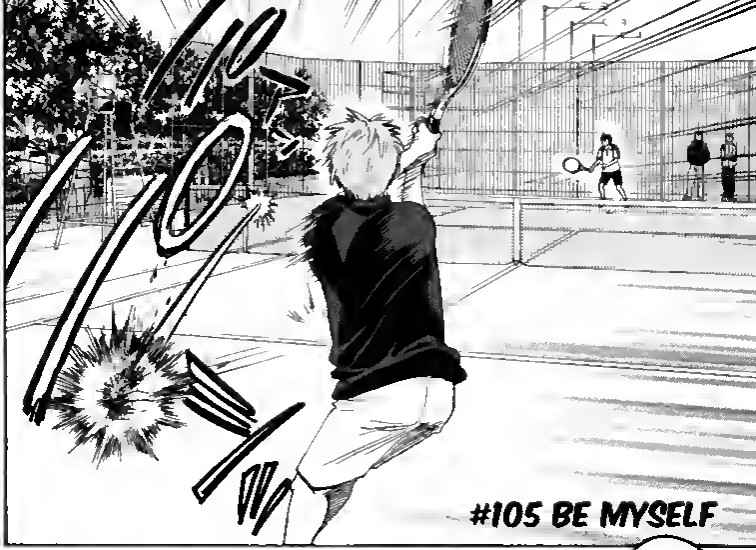
START OFF WITH ...
Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ
MAX ...
POWER !!
HA!


#105 BE MYSELF

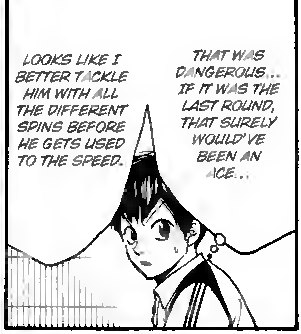
WHAT SPEED, DESPITE THAT BODY
HE ACQUIRED A HIGH SPEED SERVE USING HIS FLEXIBILITY AND AN EFFICIENT USE OF HIS BODY

15 - LOVE

FOR HIS PAST WEAKNESS TO TURN INTO SUCH A LETHAL WEAPON...

HIS SERVE'S FASTER THAN IT WAS DURING THE 1ST ROUND
FILA

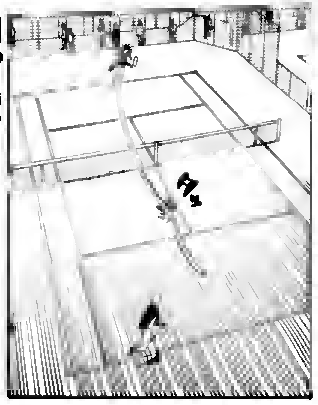
HA!


LOOKS LIKE I BETTER TACKLE HIM WITH ALL THE DIFFERENT SPINS BEFORE HE GETS USED TO THE SPEED.
THAT WAS DANGEROUS... IF IT WAS THE LAST ROUND, THAT SURELY WOULD'VE BEEN AN ACE..

THEN, THIS TIME...

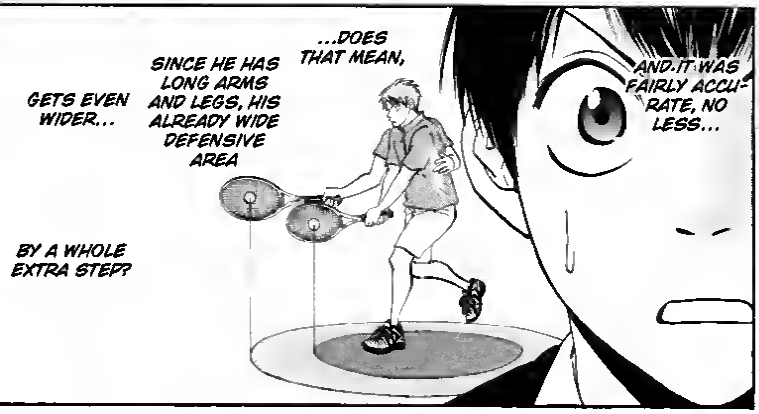
THERE'S NOT MUCH SPEED.

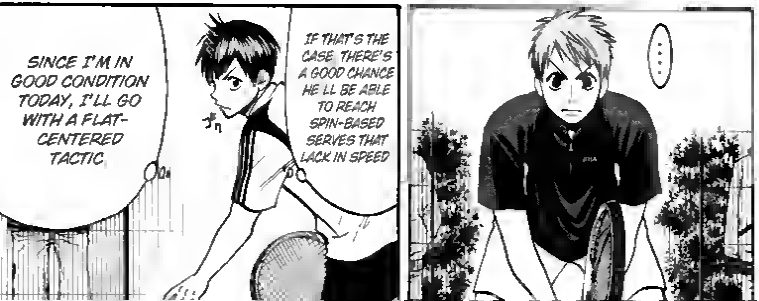
A SLICE TO THE CENTER!!



BUT IT JUMPS TO THE OUT-SIDE...
O-ONE HAND!?

OUT, 30 - LOVE
HE HIT IT WITH ONE HAND!?
A-1


...DOES THAT MEAN,
AND IT WAS FAIRLY ACCURATE, NO LESS...
SINCE HE HAS LONG ARMS AND LEGS, HIS ALREADY WIDE DEFENSIVE AREA
GETS EVEN WIDER...
BY A WHOLE EXTRA STEP?


SINCE I'M IN GOOD CONDITION TODAY, I'LL GO WITH A FLAT-CENTERED TACTIC
IF THAT'S THE CASE, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE HE'LL BE ABLE TO REACH SPIN-BASED SERVES THAT LACK IN SPEED
...

NO... FLAT IS A HIGH-RISK SERVE.
RGH... TOO MUCH STRENGTH
SINCE IT'LL BE SLOWER, CHOOSE THE COURSE PROPERLY, AND...
REFRESH MY MIND AND SECOND SERVE...
HA!
!
SPIN!

HA!
HERE IT COMES!! A FLAT POWER SHOT!
AAy
Fuu
Fuu

MOVING FORWARD...!!
ﾌﾜｯ
A BASELINER LIKE MIYAGAWA-KUN'S MOVING FORWARD!!
A A A
EXPECTING THIS!!
BUT I WAS...
ﾄﾞﾋﾞｭﾝ

IF THAT'S THE CASE, IT'S A BATTLE BETWEEN MIYAGAWA-KUN'S NEWLY ACQUIRED VOLLEY
AND MY NEWLY ACQUIRED FOOTWORK!!
SINK DOWN!!

HEY, MIYAGAWA
SHOOT, NOT AGAIN!!
AREN'T YOU FUSSING TOO MUCH OVER LOSING TO THAT MARUO GUY?
DON'T BOTHER. I'M DOING THIS CAUSE I WANT TO
RATHER THAN TRAIN YOUR VOLLEYS?
AT THIS STAGE, ISN'T IT BETTER FOR YOU TO SHARPEN YOUR STROKES
YOU SHOULD JUST BE YOURSELF.
YOU AREN'T REALLY ONE FOR SENSITIVE BALL HANDLING IN THE FIRST PLACE, RIGHT?

MO-MOGAMI... SHOOT ME A VOLLEY ONE MORE TIME PLEASE.
HEY!! HAVE YOU BEEN LISTENING!?
I WAS ABLE TO FIND IT
BECAUSE I NEVER STOPPED LOOKING, EVEN DURING MY SLUMP.
IN ORDER FOR THE OLD ME...
TO CHANGE...
A BRAND-NEW WEAPON...

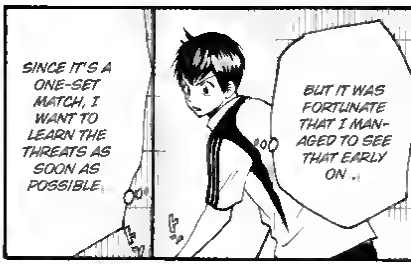
prince

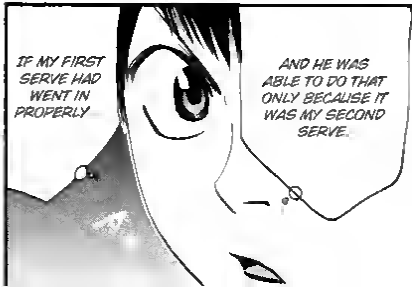
D-DRIVE VOLLEY!?
30 - 15

H-HE WENT FOR A FULL SWING EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A VOLLEY
HOW IN THE HECK DID THAT GO IN?
I SEE...
IF IT'S A DRIVE VOLLEY, HE DOESN'T HAVE TO CHANGE HIS FORM, EVEN WHEN HE MOVES UP..!
HE CAN VOLLEY WHILE KEEPING THE SAME SWING AS HIS SPECIALTY STROKES.
IT'S A BRAND NEW WEAPON THAT CAME
SOLELY FROM IMPROVING UPON HIS EXISTING SKILLS!!

AS EXPECTED, MIYAGAWA-KUN IS... STRONG!!

FOR THIS, PUT A LITTLE SPIN ON IT,
AND INCREASE THE ACCURACY OF MY FIRST SERVE...


SINCE IT'S A ONE-SET MATCH, I WANT TO LEARN THE THREATS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
BUT IT WAS FORTUNATE THAT I MANAGED TO SEE THAT EARLY ON.


IF MY FIRST SERVE HAD WENT IN PROPERLY
AND HE WAS ABLE TO DO THAT ONLY BECAUSE IT WAS MY SECOND SERVE.

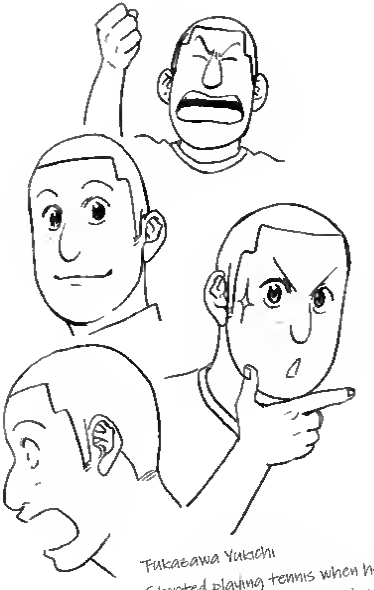
HA!
HA!
ALRIGHT...!! HE CAN'T ADVANCE FORWARD.
NOW HIT THIS DOWN THE LINE WITH A 1/64 CONTROL!!
GUH
NOW THEN...

FINISH IT!!

I ABSO-LUTELY WON'T LET HIM BREAK!
GET THE UPPER HAND WITH THE SERVE!!

40 - 15

ALRIGHT!



Fukaeawa Yukichi

Started playing tennis when he was 5 thanks to his tennis-loving parents

Although he's pretty strong during practice, he often has trouble realizing his potential during real matches

Weak under pressure

Since he comes to STC from a faraway home, his parents always come to pick him up (which is why he never goes back with Ei-chan or Natsu)

Bad taste in fashion

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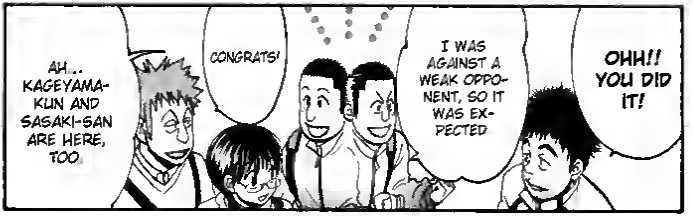
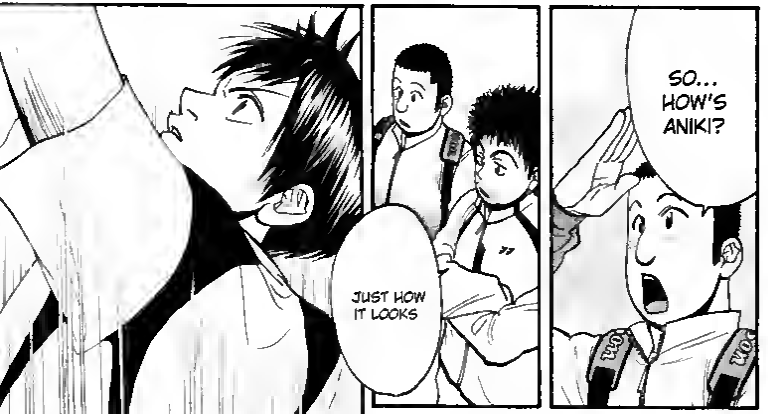




#106 PREPARATION

RGH~
HA!
ドン
OUT!
GAME, MARUO. 1 - 0
ALRIGHT!
Nice serve!!

ONE-HANDED STROKES AND DRIVE VOLLEYS.
AS EXPECTED, MIYAGAWA-KUN HAS INCREDIBLE WEAPONS...
I CAN TAKE RISKS IN RETURN GAMES!!
BEING ABLE TO KEEP MY SERVE GAMES MEAN...
AS LONG AS THE FIRST SERVE GOES IN, I CAN SEAL HIS WEAPONS.
BUT, MY SERVES ARE ALSO WORKING.
TIME.
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS HOW TO IMPLE-MENT THIS.
BUT IT WAS A PLUS TO DIS-COVER THAT I CAN EARN A POINT USING A DRIVE VOLLEY.
AS EXPECTED, HE WON'T LET ME BREAK EASILY.

HA!
I'M SURE HIS SERVE HAS ALSO IMPROVED, BUT I SHOULD FIRST JUDGE BY USING HIS PREVIOUS DATA AS A BASE...

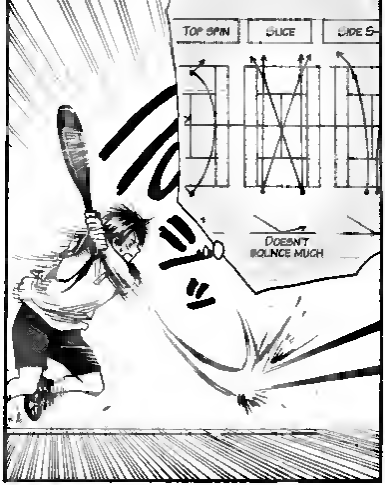
IT'S FAST!
HA!
HA!
A POWER SHOT, THEN...
HE'S MOVING UP!

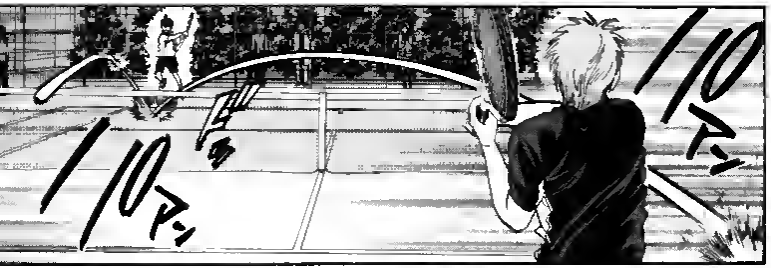
CAN THIS PASS HIM!?

15 - LOVE
SHOOT... A DRIVE VOLLEY!!
SINCE HE HAS THE ADVANTAGE IN THE RETURN GAME, I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE
IF THAT'S THE CASE, I HAVE TO FIRST MAKE SURE HE CAN'T MOVE UP EASILY.
IN ORDER TO DO THAT, I CAN'T GIVE HIM AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE UP FROM THE MOMENT WE START THE RALLY.
THAT WOULD BE TELLING ME...
HA!

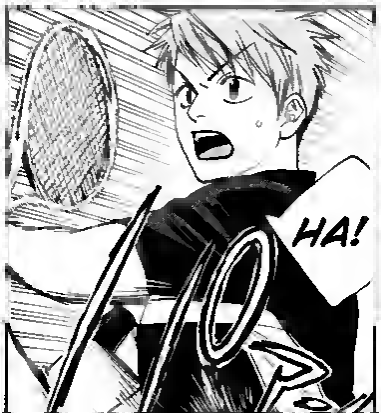
HA!
I, NOT TO BACK DOWN AGAINST THESE POWERFUL STROKES!!
HA!
SIDE SPIN
TOP SPIN
SLICE
CUTS TO THE SIDE
SINKS THEN JUMPS
DOESN'T BOUNCE MUCH

RECOGNIZE THE TYPE OF SPIN QUICKLY... GET IT UNDER CONTROL... AND DON'T LET HIM MOVE UP!!


TOP SPIN
SLICE
SIDE S
DOESN'T BOUNCE MUCH



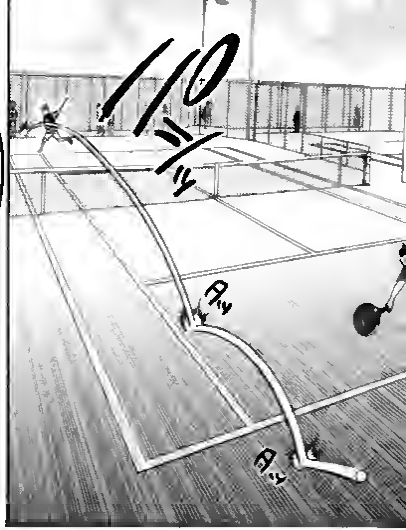
AS EXPECTED, ANIKI'S LEAGUES AHEAD OF WHAT HE WAS LAST YEAR.
HE'S FIGHTING OFF MIYAGAWA'S STROKES EVEN THOUGH IT'S HIS RETURN GAME


HA!

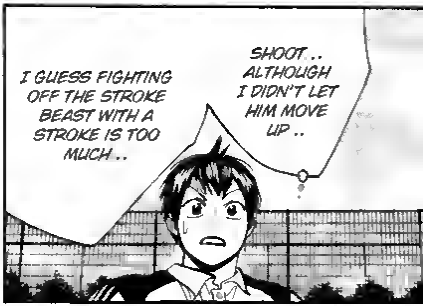
EVEN US OUTSIDERS CAN TELL.
LAST TIME IT FELT LIKE HE WAS DESPERATELY RUNNING AWAY FROM LOSING.
BUT NOW I CAN SEE HE'S GOING FOR THE WIN.
BUT... HE'S STILL AHEAD OF ME A BIT...
HA!
A FLAT POWER SHOT STRAIGHT DOWN THE LINE!!

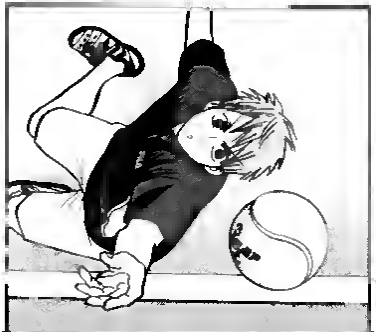
CONTROL!!
ピュン
GO WITH 1/8!...
I HAVE TO TAKE A RISK AND SOME-HOW...
IF I DON'T RETURN THIS PROPERLY, I'LL GIVE HIM AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE FORWARD
IT ACTUALLY WENT IN!
ピュッ
タッ
HE CAN REACH IT WITH ONE HAND!!
ピュッ
BUT, IT'S NOT FAST ENOUGH.
IF IT'S THE CURRENT MIYAGAWA-KUN...

30 - LOVE



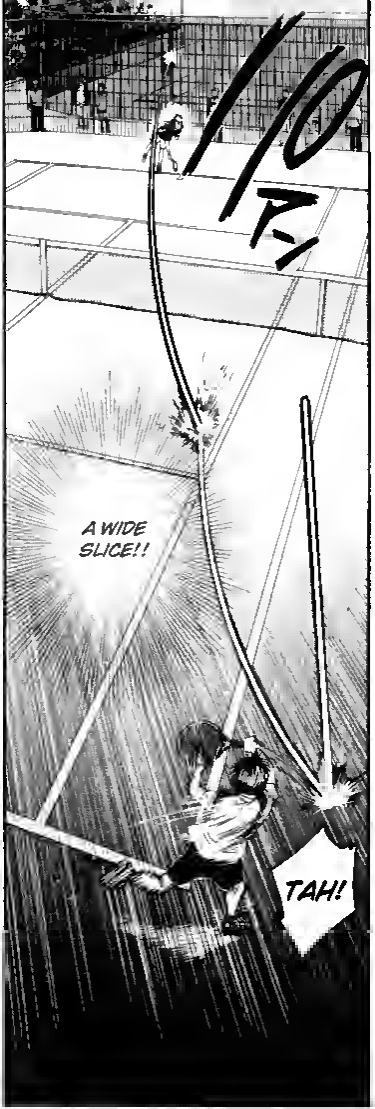
THEN, EVEN BEFORE IT BECOMES A RALLY BATTLE ...


I GUESS FIGHTING OFF THE STROKE BEAST WITH A STROKE IS TOO MUCH ..
SHOOT .. ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T LET HIM MOVE UP ..



I'LL FIGHT HIM IN MY RETURN...

パコ
40 - LOVE
GUESS IT'S TOO TOUGH IF HIS FIRST SERVE GOES IN A GOOD SPOT...
BUT .. COMPARED TO A YEAR AGO, HIS SERVE CHANGED THE LEAST...
HA!
ア-!


ア-!
A WIDE SLICE!!
TAH!

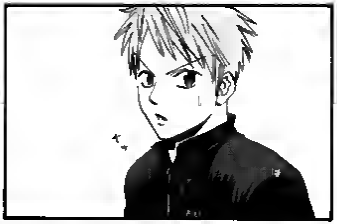
!
HEY, LOOK!!
WHAT SHOULD I DO IF HE FORCES HIS WAY TO THE NET?
RGH HE'S FORCING HIS WAY UP!!
FIRST, AVOID A ONE-HIT KILL AND HIT IT TOWARD HIS FEET, LIKE IN THE BASICS.
THAT MIYAGAWA... IS PULLING A SERVE AND VOLLEY!?

HA!
カッ
BUT HE'LL RETURN THAT NO PROBLEM.
SINCE IT TAKES SOME TIME TO PREPARE A SWING FOR A DRIVE VOLLEY,
THEN...
ガッ

HA!
HIT FASTER!!
!!

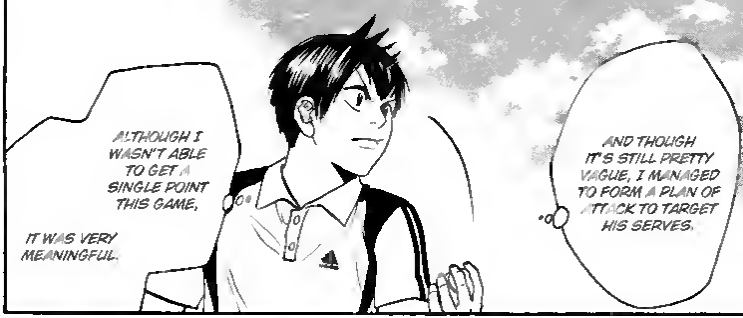
GAME, MIYAGAWA. 1 - 1

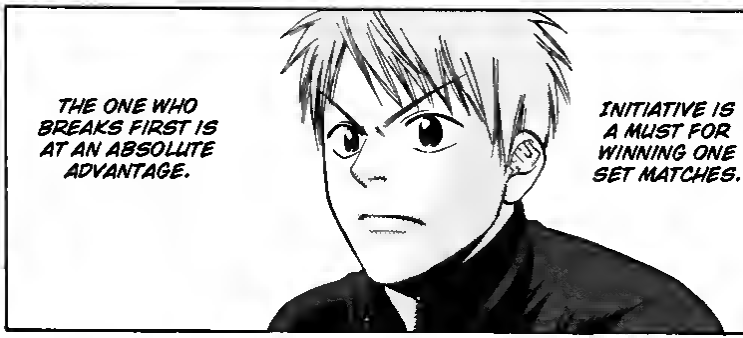
THAT WAS TOO MUCH FAR TOO RISKY...



ALTHOUGH IT'S RISKY...
THERE'S A CHANCE IF I CAN DROP A FAST BALL NEAR HIS FEET

IF IT HAD GONE IN, IT WOULD'VE BEEN A NORMAL VOLLEY RATHER THAN A DRIVE VOLLEY.
BUT... HE WASN'T ABLE TO PREPARE HIS SWING ON TIME.


ALTHOUGH I WASN'T ABLE TO GET A SINGLE POINT THIS GAME,
IT WAS VERY MEANINGFUL.
AND THOUGH IT'S STILL PRETTY VAGUE, I MANAGED TO FORM A PLAN OF ATTACK TO TARGET HIS SERVES.


THE ONE WHO BREAKS FIRST IS AT AN ABSOLUTE ADVANTAGE.
INITIATIVE IS A MUST FOR WINNING ONE SET MATCHES.

IN ORDER TO BREAK...
I HAVE TO SAFELY SECURE THIS GAME!!

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Baby Steps

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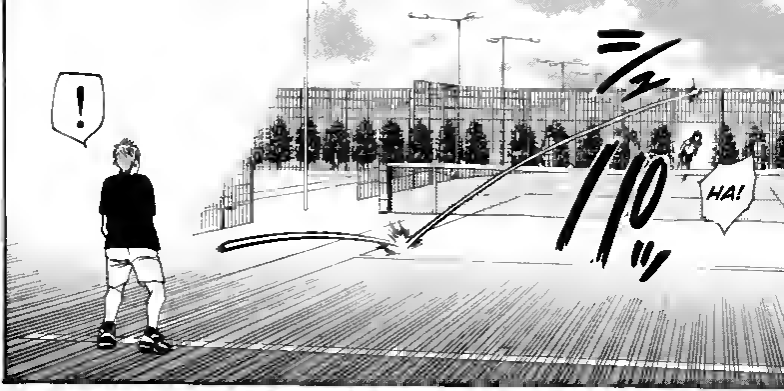
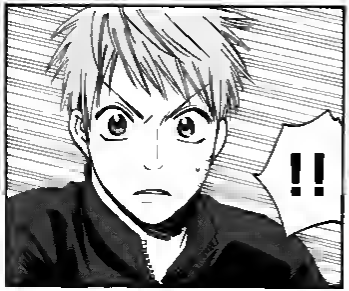
HAVE TO BE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE WHILE MAINTAINING OVER 70% ACCURACY!!
IN ORDER TO KEEP THIS GAME, FIRST AND FOREMOST, MY FIRST SERVES...
HA!

#107 DIFFERENT PERSON

ONCE IT GOES IN, I'LL USE MY SERVICE ADVANTAGE TO PREVENT HIM FROM HITTING A DRIVE VOLLEY...
IN OTHER WORDS, DON'T LOOSEN MY ATTACK, AND...
DON'T LET HIM RUN TO THE NET!!
110アーン
HE CAN HIT STROKES WITH ONE HAND, TOO...
CONSIDER HOW HIS DEFENSIVE RANGE HAS WIDENED, AND...
HA!
110ライン

CONTROL!!
ALRIGHT!
15 - LOVE
WHILE THAT FLAT SERVE IS STILL FRESH IN MIYAGAWA-KUN'S EYES...


!
HA!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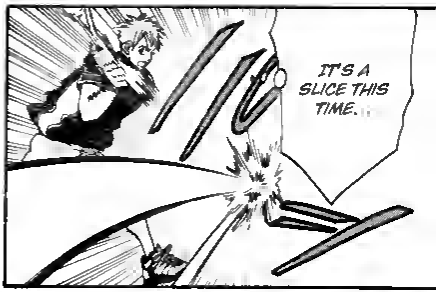
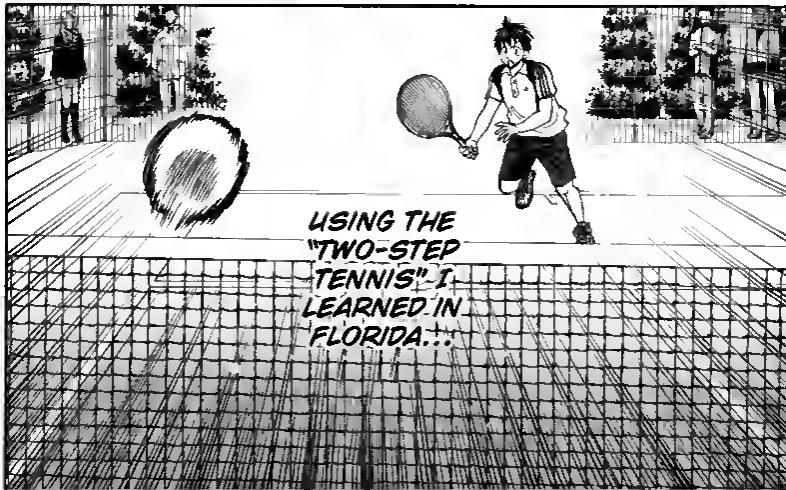
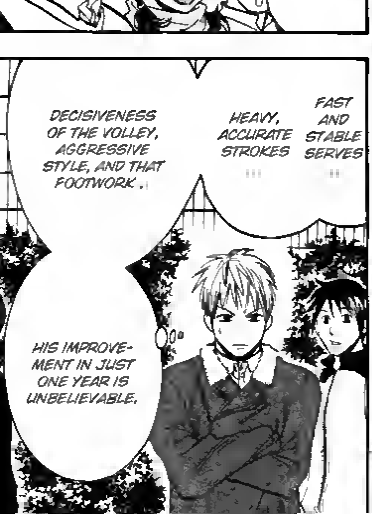

IT'S A SLICE THIS TIME...


USING THE "TWO-STEP TENNIS" I LEARNED IN FLORIDA...!

HA!
FINISH IT IN ONE BLOW!!

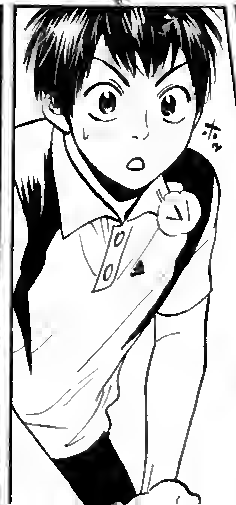
YUP! LOOKS GOOD!!


DECISIVENESS OF THE VOLLEY, AGGRESSIVE STYLE, AND THAT FOOTWORK.
HEAVY, ACCURATE STROKES
FAST AND STABLE SERVES
HIS IMPROVEMENT IN JUST ONE YEAR IS UNBELIEVABLE.

30 - LOVE
RIGHT!!

NO... STAY CALM.
FILA
HOW DID HE MANAGE THAT IN SUCH A SHORT TIME...
FILA
IT'S MY RETURN GAME, I'M SUPPOSED TO BE AT A DISADVANTAGE.
AND IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO RETURN THOSE SERVES AS LONG AS I PAY ATTENTION TO THE VARIATION IN SPEED.

40 - LOVE



HE CAN GO... EVEN FASTER!?

GAME, MARUO. 2 - 1
HEY, HEY!! HE'S DOING AMAZING AGAINST THE 3RD SEED.
YEAH... HE'S HAVING NO TROUBLE KEEPING HIS GAMES.
AND IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A FLUKE

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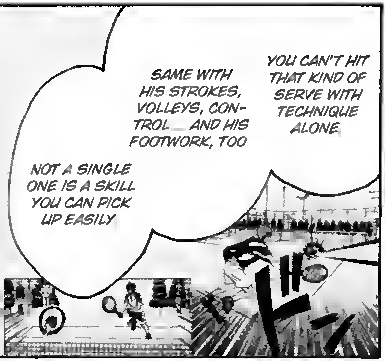
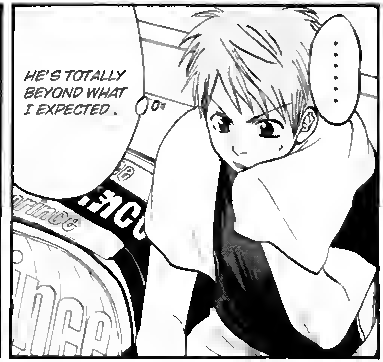
ザワザワザワ
ザワ
prince


SAME WITH HIS STROKES, VOLLEYS, CONTROL... AND HIS FOOTWORK, TOO
YOU CAN'T HIT THAT KIND OF SERVE WITH TECHNIQUE ALONE
NOT A SINGLE ONE IS A SKILL YOU CAN PICK UP EASILY
ドーン


HE'S TOTALLY BEYOND WHAT I EXPECTED.
.....

I SHOULD CONSIDER HIM A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON FROM A YEAR AGO
THOSE THINGS ARE SUPPORTING THE EVOLUTION OF HIS BASIC TECHNIQUES
HIS ALL-AROUND REACTION SPEED AND FLEXIBILITY
HIS BODY, THAT'S THE BASIS OF SUCH TECHNIQUES EVOLVING, TOO

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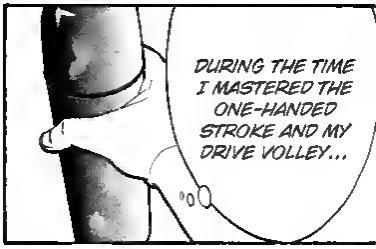
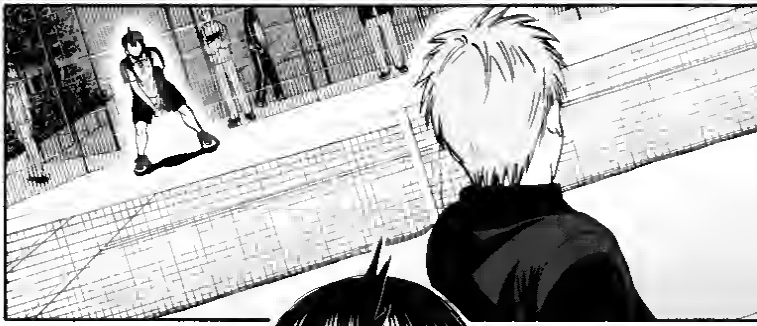
DURING THAT SAME PERIOD, HOW DID HE COME THIS FAR...


DURING THE TIME I MASTERED THE ONE-HANDED STROKE AND MY DRIVE VOLLEY...

フゥ、

EH...? ISN'T IT OKAY TO DRINK TEA ANYTIME YOU WANT?
TEA IN THE MIDDLE OF A MATCH?
Kelp tea no less.
AH... HE'S DRINKING HIS KELP TEA ALREADY.
YOU SEE. HE DRINKS KELP TEA ONLY DURING CRUCIAL MOMENTS
WHERE HE WANTS TO STAY FOCUSED OR CLEAR HIS MIND.
I FELT IT WAS PRETTY EARLY FOR HIM TO DO THAT IN A 2-1 WHEN THEY KEPT THEIR RESPECTIVE GAMES
TIME!
AS EXPECTED OF A SEEDED PLAYER. I THINK HE PICKED THE PERFECT TIMING.
EH...!? THEN THE MATCH IS ABOUT TO BE DECIDED ALREADY?

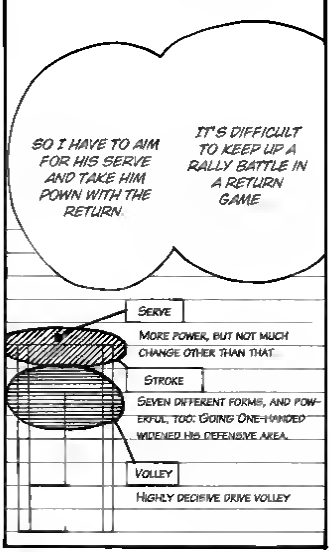
IT'S AMAZING HOW MARUO-KUN MANAGED TO IMPROVE HIS TENNIS OVERALL IN THIS SHORT PERIOD...
BUT HAVING THE MOST IMPROVEMENTS ISN'T NECESSARILY THE ANSWER.
MY ONLY IMPROVEMENTS ARE THE DRIVE VOLLEY AND MY STROKE,
BUT THEIR QUALITIES ARE HIGH BECAUSE I FOCUSED SOLELY ON THEM.



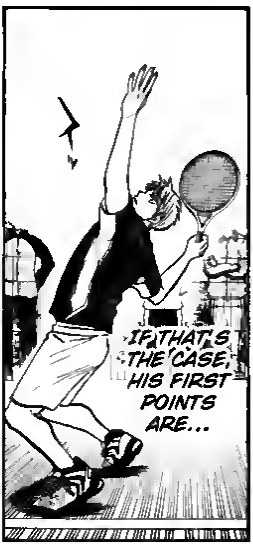
THINGS I LEARNED FROM THE PREVIOUS GAME...

MIYAGAWA-KUN'S SERVE HAD AN OVERALL INCREASE IN POWER,
BUT THERE HASN'T BEEN MUCH CHANGE OTHER THAN THAT

SO, IT'S HIGHLY LIKELY THAT THE DATA I COLLECTED LAST YEAR WILL STILL BE USEFUL...
WIDE
65%
WIDE
60%
BODY
10%
CENTER
25%
35%
BODY
5%


SO I HAVE TO AIM FOR HIS SERVE AND TAKE HIM DOWN WITH THE RETURN
IT'S DIFFICULT TO KEEP UP A RALLY BATTLE IN A RETURN GAME
SERVE
MORE POWER, BUT NOT MUCH CHANGE OTHER THAN THAT
STROKE
SEVEN DIFFERENT FORMS, AND POWERFUL, TOO: GOING ONE-HANDED WIDENED HIS DEFENSIVE AREA.
VOLLEY
HIGHLY DECISIVE DRIVE VOLLEY

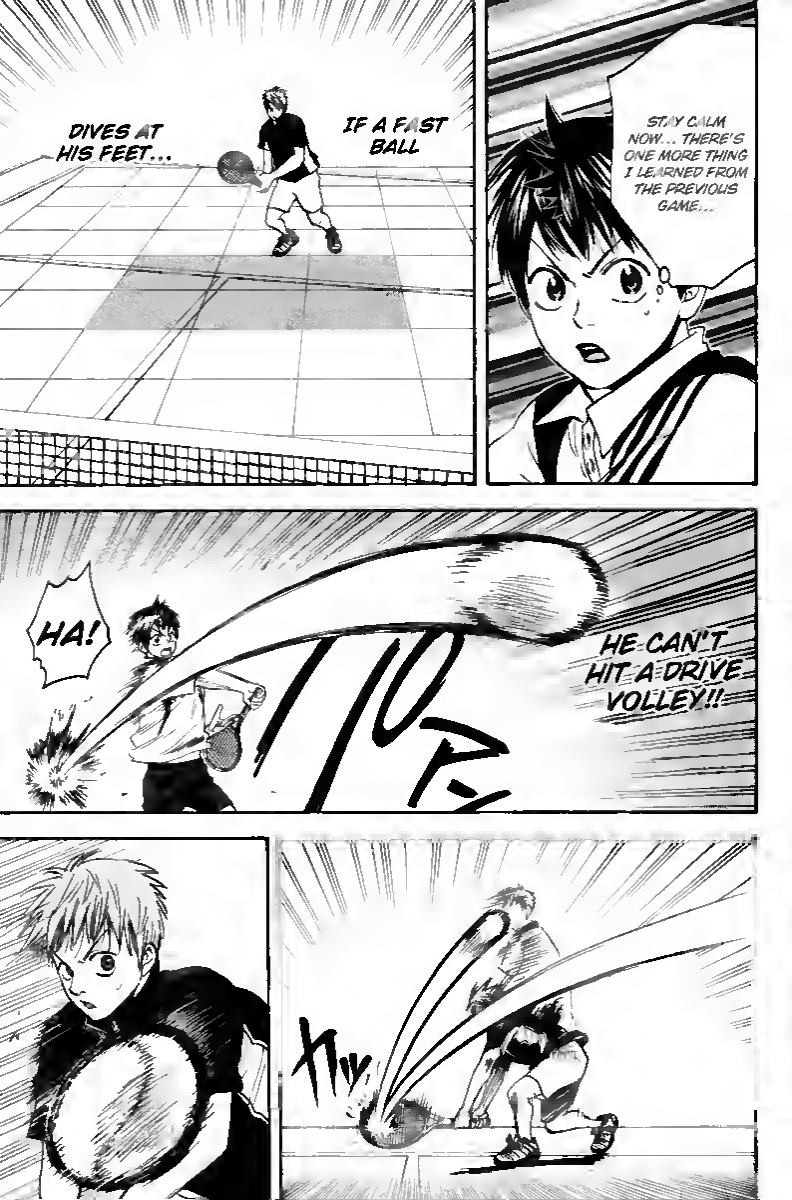
OVER 60% WIDE!!

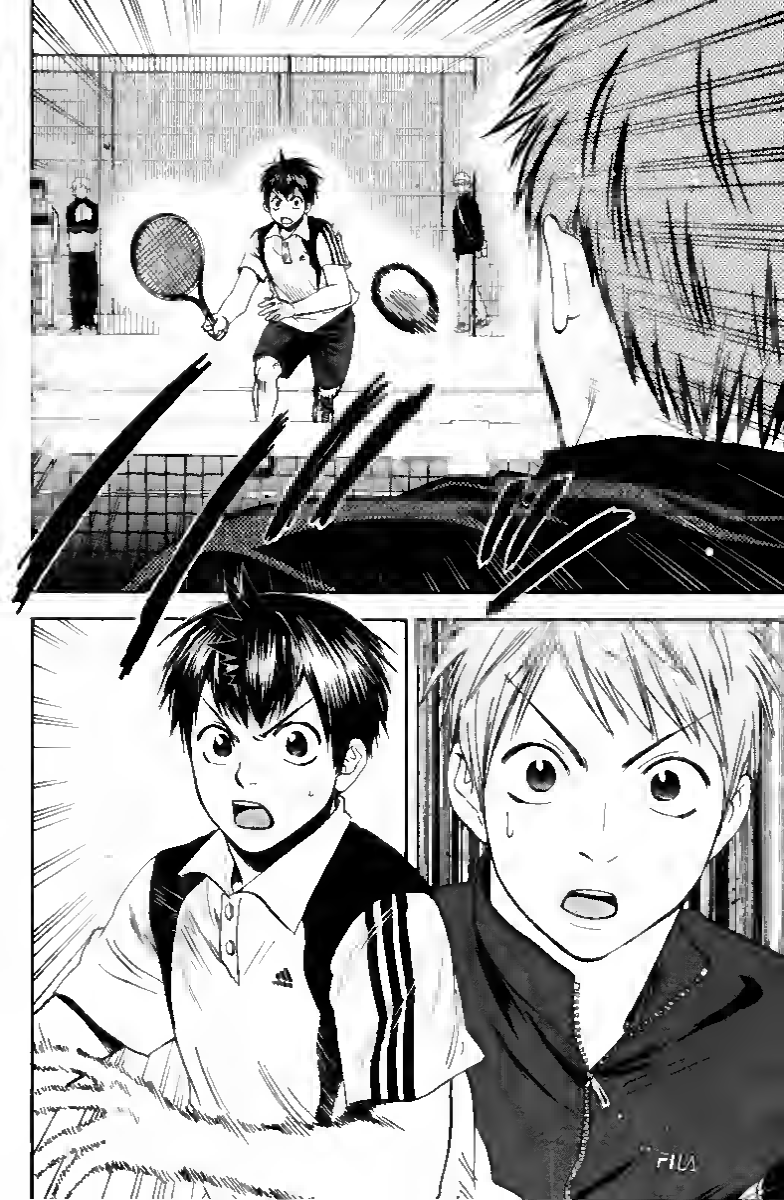

IF THAT'S THE CASE, HIS FIRST POINTS ARE...

HA!
HERE COMES!!
!
OHH! GREAT RETURN!!
HE HIT IT FULL POWER!!
RGH~
ONCE IT LANDS, THE TABLE'S COMPLETELY TURNED!!
MAKE THIS A SOLID.

CONTROL!!
LOVE - 15
HE READ MY SERVE!!
ALRIGHT!!

HE CHANGED IT UP AS I THOUGHT.
HA!
THEN HOW ABOUT A TOPSPIN TO HIS BODY!?
SHOOT... HE'S GONNA TAKE THE NET!!
HA!


DIVES AT HIS FEET...
IF A FAST BALL
STAY CALM NOW... THERE'S ONE MORE THING I LEARNED FROM THE PREVIOUS GAME...
HA!
HE CAN'T HIT A DRIVE VOLLEY!!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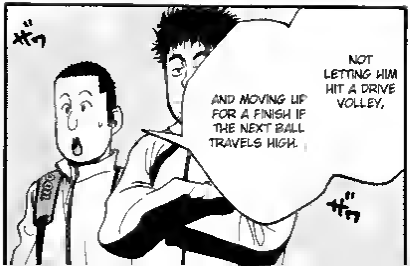
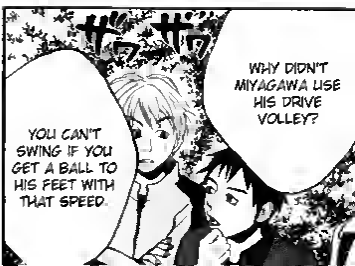
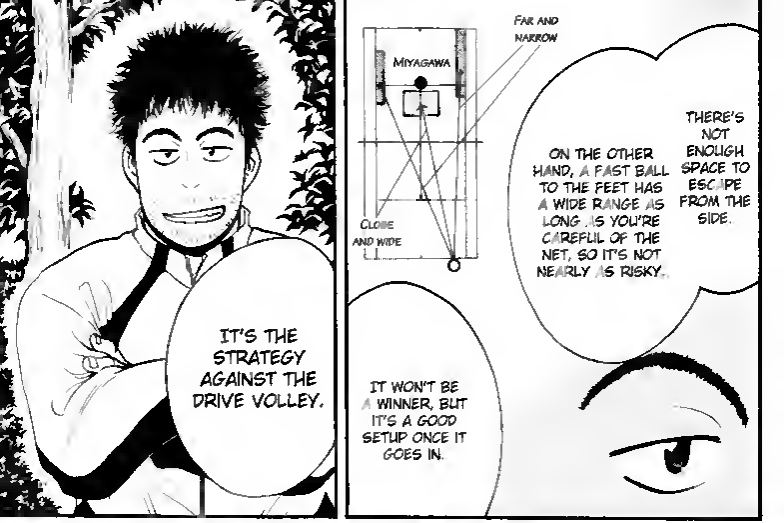
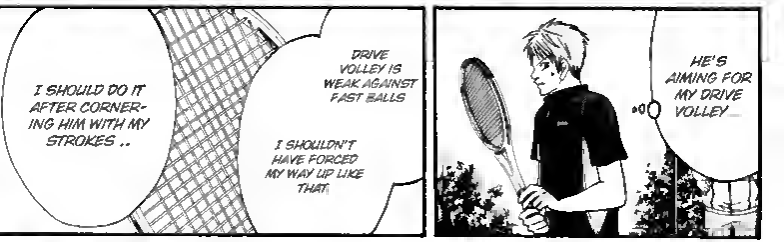
#108 CHANCE

LOVE - 30
ALRIGHT !!
HA!
ヒュッ


ホッ
NOT LETTING HIM HIT A DRIVE VOLLEY,
AND MOVING UP FOR A FINISH IF THE NEXT BALL TRAVELS HIGH.
ホッ

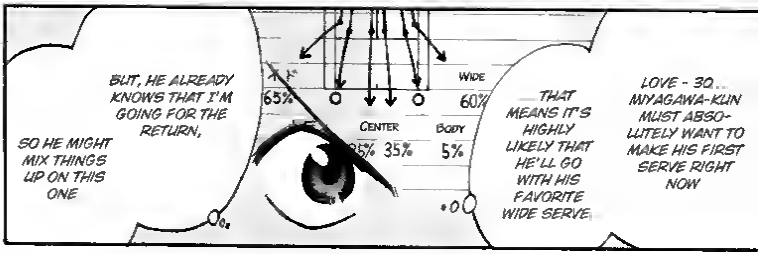

ザワザワ
WHY DIDN'T MIYAGAWA USE HIS DRIVE VOLLEY?
YOU CAN'T SWING IF YOU GET A BALL TO HIS FEET WITH THAT SPEED.


IT'S THE STRATEGY AGAINST THE DRIVE VOLLEY.
MIYAGAWA
FAR AND NARROW
CLOSE AND WIDE
IT WON'T BE A WINNER, BUT IT'S A GOOD SETUP ONCE IT GOES IN.
ON THE OTHER HAND, A FAST BALL TO THE FEET HAS A WIDE RANGE AS LONG AS YOU'RE CAREFUL OF THE NET, SO IT'S NOT NEARLY AS RISKY.
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH SPACE TO ESCAPE FROM THE SIDE.


I SHOULD DO IT AFTER CORNERING HIM WITH MY STROKES ..
DRIVE VOLLEY IS WEAK AGAINST FAST BALLS
I SHOULDN'T HAVE FORCED MY WAY UP LIKE THAT.
HE'S AIMING FOR MY DRIVE VOLLEY...

IS BEING TARGETED.
BUT, EVEN THAT SERVE
IN ORDER FOR THAT, I NEED TO TAKE THE ADVANTAGE WITH MY SERVE.

FOR THE SAKE OF A BREAK...
WHAT I NEED TO DO IS CLEAR!!
IF HE ENDS UP AT THE NET, HIT A FAST BALL TO HIS FEET AND BREAK HIS DRIVE VOLLEY.
FIRST, BREAK DOWN HIS SERVE .. RISK IT AT THE RETURN AND GAIN THE ADVANTAGE THEN, KEEP HIM FROM MOVING UP
HI!


BUT, HE ALREADY KNOWS THAT I'M GOING FOR THE RETURN,
SO HE MIGHT MIX THINGS UP ON THIS ONE
WIDE
60%
65%
CENTER
BODY
35%
5%
THAT MEANS IT'S HIGHLY LIKELY THAT HE'LL GO WITH HIS FAVORITE WIDE SERVE
LOVE - 30... MIYAGAWA-KUN MUST ABSOLUTELY WANT TO MAKE HIS FIRST SERVE RIGHT NOW

KEEP 30% OF MY FOCUS ON THE CENTER, AND LEAVE THE REST ON WIDE!!

HA!
IT'S WIDE!!
RGH
GO IN!!

I SHOULD'VE PUT 100% ON WIDE.
SHOOT!!
OUT!
15 - 30
I HAVE TO BREAK!!
THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO BE TRYING TO PLAY IT SAFE!!
I'M IN THE LEAD IN MY RETURN GAME!!
THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT CENTER WILL BE NEXT...
SO FAR, IT WAS WIDE -> BODY -> WIDE.
HE CAUGHT UP TO IT EVEN THOUGH IT WASN'T A BAD SERVE..
FILA

THIS TIME, 100% ON THE CENTER!!
CENTER, HERE IT COMES!!
DAH!
!

CRAP... HE READ IT AND IS NOW MOVING UP!!
NNG!
ONE-HAND... BUT IT'S GOING IN!!

REACH!!

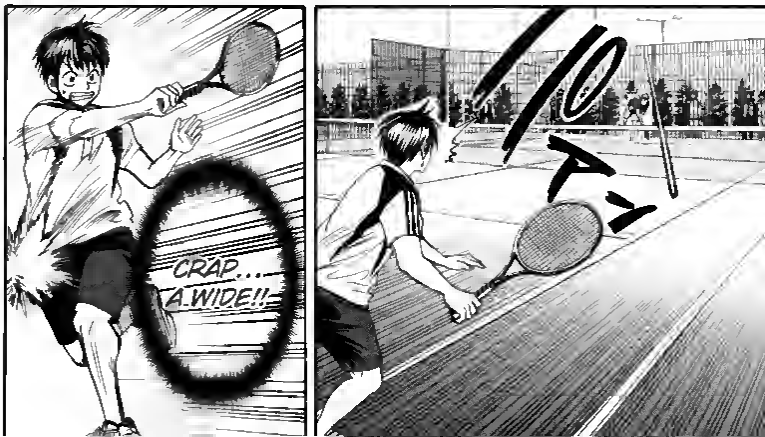
HA!
ハルッッ

THAT WAS A GREAT RETURN DASH!!
UWOO OOOOO OO!!
AMAAAAA AAZING!!
お
お
お
お
HEY! HEY! HEY!... THAT MEANS, IT'S FINALLY...

15 - 40

MARUO'S BREAK POINT!!
adidas
ALRIGHT!! YOU CAN DO IT, EI-CHAN!!
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING ME!? IS MIYAGAWA HAVING A ROUGH DAY?
おぉぉ
HAVEN'T YOU BEEN WATCHING? NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, MARUO'S BEEN PLAYING HARD FOR THOSE POINTS!!

NEXT IS A BODY.. I'LL GO ALL IN ON THIS...!!


CRAP... A WIDE!!
10 メートル

IF I'M OFF, RETURN IT DEEP, AND...
GET BACK QUICKLY!!
AS LONG AS MIYAGAWA-KUN DOESN'T MOVE UP, I'M STUCK WITH A RALLY BATTLE!!
RGH~
HA!
HA!

AS EXPECTED, MIYAGAWA HAS THE UPPER HAND IN A RALLY.
EI-CHAN, KEEP IT UP!!
IT'S STILL IN!!
WOW~
HOW DOES MIYAGAWA HIT SUCH RISKY BALLS IN A BREAK POINT?
ISN'T HE AFRAID HE'LL MISS?
IT MEANS HE'S IN A SITUATION WHERE HE CAN'T AFFORD TO DO ANYTHING ELSE

AMONG ALL THOSE DIFFERENT SHOTS, WHICH ONE..
THEN WHERE SHOULD I TAKE THAT RISK..
AN ALL-OUT DEFENSE... IT'S A STALEMATE!!
FOR ME TO TAKE THE ADVANTAGE, I HAVE TO FORCE MY WAY UP WITH ONE SHOT...
IT'LL BE DIFFICULT, BUT COMPARED TO IKE-KUN'S OR ALEX'S FLAT, IT SHOULD BE MUCH EASIER TO GET THE TIMING RIGHT...
TAKE THE RISK AND USE THE SPEED TO SLAM IT IN THE OPEN COURT!!
PROBABLY THE MOST POWERFUL FLAT SHOT...
I HAVE TO FIGHT HIM HEAD ON!!
IN THE END, I CAN'T AVOID A RALLY BATTLE AGAINST MIYAGAWA-KUN...

GOOD... I'M FORCING HIM BACK.
HA!
110
110
IN MY ADVANTAGEOUS SERVE GAME,
AT MY SPECIALTY RALLY BATTLE...
THERE'S NO WAY I'LL LOSE!!
Shh
Shh

HERE COMES THE FLAT!
RETURN THIS WITH ALL MY...
!!
HA!

OUT!
GAME, MARUO.
COUNT: 3 - 1!!

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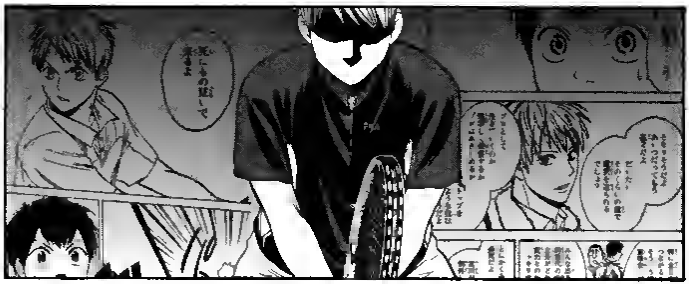
OUT!
GAME, MARUO. COUNT: 3 - 1!!
BREAK ...!!
#109 BEYOND

MI-MIYAGAWA BROKE FIRST!!
AND WASN'T MARUO IN THE LEAD THE WHOLE TIME, TOO?
MIYAGAWA NOT ONLY GOT HIS DRIVE VOLLEY STOPPED,
BUT GOT STALLED ON THE RALLY, TOO. THAT MUST'VE GOT TO HIM.
MARUO MUST'VE BEEN PLANNING FOR THE NEXT ATTACK RATHER THAN SIMPLY STALLING.
THE STATE OF "NOT KNOWING WHEN HE'LL LOSE, EVEN IN HIS FAVORITE RALLY" MUST'VE CAUSED MIYAGAWA TO MAKE AN ERROR.
SO MARUO-KUN CAN WIN?
SOUNDS LIKE HE'S DOING MUCH BETTER THAN THE ACTUAL SCORE SHOWS.

I MANAGED TO BREAK FIRST
IN AN IMPORTANT ONE-SET MATCH!!
BUT MY OPPONENT IS MIYAGAWA-KUN... I CAN'T RELAX WITH JUST ONE BREAK.



LIKE BEFORE, MAINTAIN 70% ACCURACY ON MY FIRST SERVE,
BUT FOCUS ON FLAT SHOTS AND KEEP SPEED AS MY TOP PRIORITY...

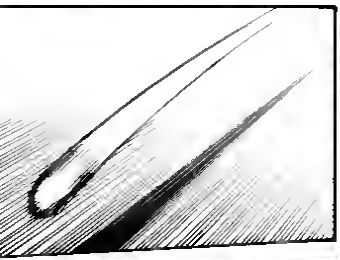
NO... THIS COULD ACTUALLY BE A DANGEROUS MOMENT.

THERE'S A 30% RISK, SO I RESET MYSELF.
FOR THE SECOND SERVE, PICK A DIRECTION WITH A 100% ACCURATE SPIN-BASED SERVE!!
KEEP THIS NO MATTER WHAT!!
HA!
HA!

15 - LOVE

A MISS WHEN RETURNING A SECOND SERVE...
THAT'S A CARELESS ERROR THAT HASN'T HAPPENED SO FAR.

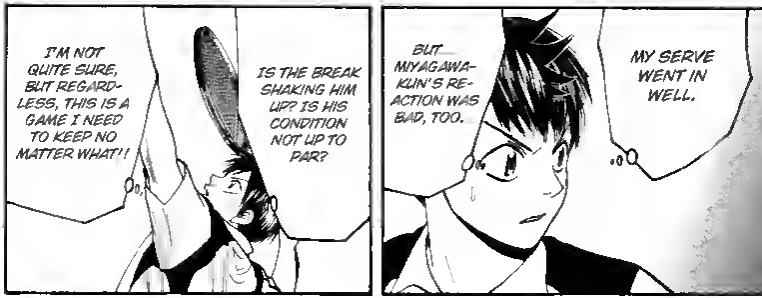
!?



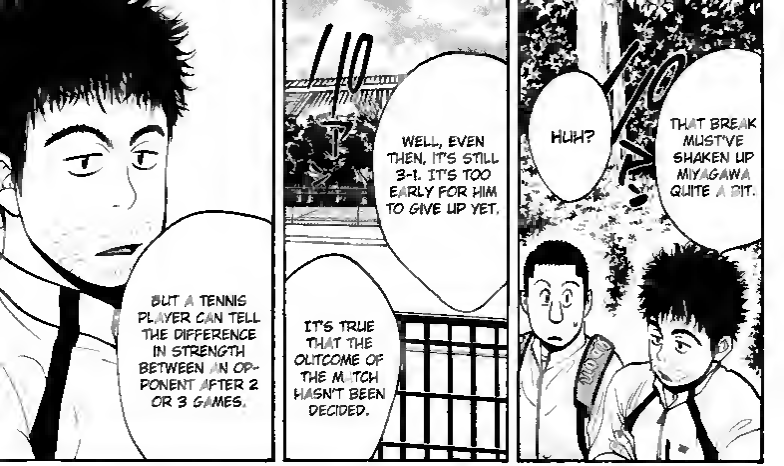
RGH~

HA!

30 - LOVE
ドン


I'M NOT QUITE SURE, BUT REGARDLESS, THIS IS A GAME I NEED TO KEEP NO MATTER WHAT!!
IS THE BREAK SHAKING HIM UP? IS HIS CONDITION NOT UP TO PAR?
BUT... MIYAGAWA-KUN'S REACTION WAS BAD, TOO.
MY SERVE WENT IN WELL.

HA!


BUT A TENNIS PLAYER CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE IN STRENGTH BETWEEN AN OPPONENT AFTER 2 OR 3 GAMES.
IT'S TRUE THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE MATCH HASN'T BEEN DECIDED.
WELL, EVEN THEN, IT'S STILL 3-1. IT'S TOO EARLY FOR HIM TO GIVE UP YET.
HUH?
THAT BREAK MUST'VE SHAKEN UP MIYAGAWA QUITE A BIT.

RIGHT NOW, HE'S DEFINITELY BETTER THAN ME...
FILA
HE'S STRONG ...

I'VE NEVER FELT SUCH A THING BEFORE.
ONCE I THOUGHT THAT, MY BODY STOPPED MOVING...
NEXT ...?
OUT. 40 - LOVE
I'VE BEEN FIGHTING WITH ALL MY MIGHT TILL THE VERY END, NO MATTER HOW STRONG OF AN OPPONENT I WAS UP AGAINST...
BECAUSE THAT'LL HELP WITH MY NEXT...
IS IT BECAUSE THERE'S NO MORE FUTURE...!?
THERE'S NO WAY A HIGH SCHOOL PLAYER WHO LOSES IN THE PREFECTURE LEVEL...
CAN BECOME A PROFESSIONAL PLAYER.

GAME, MARUO. 4-1.
ONCE THAT HAPPENS, I CAN NO LONGER HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO AIM TO BE A PRO.
ANIKI!! NICE KEEP!!
YOU CAN WIN IF YOU CONTINUE HOLDING OUT, RIGHT!?
……
!?
HEY MIYAGAWA!!
O-OOBAYASHI-SENPAI..?

DO YOUR BEST MIYAGAWA!!
IF... IF YOU DON'T DO YOUR BEST HERE...
YOU'LL REGRET IT FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE!!
OOBAYASHI... -SENPAI....
HE'S RIGHT...
REGRET IT...
THERE IS A 'NEXT'
FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...

NOT ONLY TENNIS, THERE'LL ALWAYS BE A 'NEXT' BATTLE AS LONG AS I CONTINUE LIVING.
I MIGHT CONTINUE PLAYING TENNIS IN COLLEGE LIKE OOBAYASHI-SENPAI...
prince
IF I GIVE UP NOW, I'LL END UP GIVING UP IN THE 'NEXT', AND THE 'NEXT' AFTER THAT...
Toss
I DON'T... WANT THAT!!
So sour...

....
This guys got nerves of steel
Good choice!
Umeboshi for punishment and refreshment
That surprised me!
DUMBFOUNDED
IS THAT HOW OOBAYASHI-KUN IS AT SCHOOL?
TIME!
1
Maruo 4
Miyagawa 1

IF I THINK BACK TO LAST YEAR ...
MARUO-KUN'S THE ONE
WHO ALSO TAUGHT ME THAT THE BEST DOESN'T NECES-SARILY WIN!!

HA!
IT'S FAST!!
RGH-
YES!
15 - LOVE

THAT WAS THE FASTEST HE HIT TODAY...
SO HE'S DIFFERENT FROM THE PREVIOUS GAME...
I CAN'T RELY ON MIYAGAWA-KUN'S ERRORS ANYMORE
I'LL GO FOR ANOTHER BREAK BY STARTING WITH HIS SERVE LIKE LAST TIME!!
HE'LL DEFINITELY MAKE HIS FIRST SERVE.
SO, THE MOST LIKELY ONE IS...
HA!
A WIDE SERVE, HIS FAVORITE!!
10 AT

HA!
THAT'S DEEP.
Pyu
NGH!
HE'S MATCHING MY HIGH-RISK RETURN WITH AN EVEN RISKIER POWER SHOT OF HIS OWN
SINCE I'VE ALREADY HIT MY BREAKING POINT, I'M AT AN ADVANTAGE IN SUCH A BATTLE.

THIS TIME, TAKE A BET, AND...
1/81!!
HE'S MOVING UP!!

OUT!
15 - 15
A...
LOB!!
C-CLOSE!!
MIYAGAWA SUDDENLY CHANGED HIS PACE.
YEAH... MARUO WAS COMPLETELY THROWN OFF ON THAT ONE, TOO.
NOW THAT I'VE ACCEPTED OUR DIFFERENCE IN STRENGTH
HOW DO I WIN THIS MATCH?

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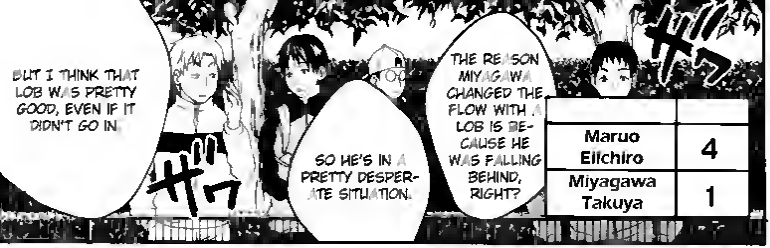

BUT I THINK THAT LOB WAS PRETTY GOOD, EVEN IF IT DIDN'T GO IN.
SO HE'S IN A PRETTY DESPERATE SITUATION.
THE REASON MIYAGAWA CHANGED THE FLOW WITH A LOB IS BECAUSE HE WAS FALLING BEHIND, RIGHT?
Maruo Eiichiro 4
Miyagawa Takuya 1

I'LL KEEP ON ATTACKING, EVEN WITH HIGH RISKS...
JUST LIKE HOW MARUO-KUN BEAT ME LAST YEAR,
BUT STILL... I WON'T LOSE!!
I UNDERSTOOD OUR DIFFERENCE IN STRENGTH

I'LL BET ALL 16 YEARS OF MY LIFE!!
#110 JOY AND TEARS

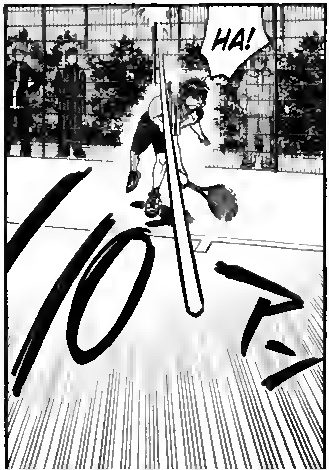
HA!
HE'S GOTTEN EVEN FASTER!!

INCREDIBLE SPIN...!!
HAH!
URGH!
THE SHARPNESS OF HIS BALLS ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE!!
30 - 15

EVEN THOUGH HE'S PLAYING IN SUCH A HIGH RISK WAY, HE REFUSES TO MAKE A MISTAKE...
THIS FEELING...
IT'S THE FEELING OF ATTACKING AGGRESSIVELY WITH AN INSTINCTIVE REACTION...
IT MIGHT BE A LOT LIKE HOW I WAS DURING THE MATCH WITH ALEX...

STILL NOT OVER?
AH, ARAYA-KUN.
OH?
GUH!
ALRIGHT!
40 - 15
THAT MIYAGAWA... HIT A DROP SHOT PER-FECTLY?

AL-
RIGHT!!
GAME, MIYAGAWA. 4 - 2. MARUO LEAD.
HE MUST BE IN TOP FORM.


HA!

BUT MORE IMPOR-TANTLY, I SHOULDN'T LET HIM BREAK ON THIS ONE!!

I COULDN'T BREAK LIKE LAST TIME...

EVEN IF I'M NO GOOD WITH THE RETURNS...

A SLICE ESCAPING TO THE SIDE!!

THERE'RE TOO MANY PATTERNS FOR ME TO READ
HIS SERVES CONSTANTLY CHANGE IN SPEED, SPIN, AND DIRECTION.

I STILL HAVE THE STROKES!!
HAH!!

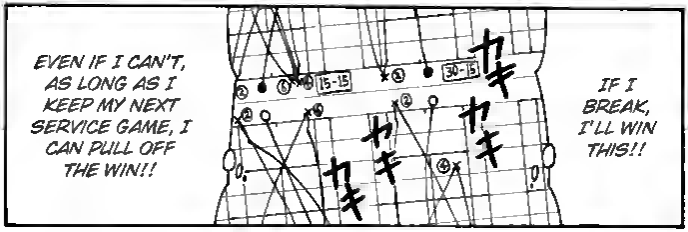
NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, IT'S WAY TOO FORCEFUL.
EVEN THOUGH HE SHOULD BE MAKING A MISTAKE EVENTUALLY...
RGH
THEY'RE ALL GOING IN!!
YOU CAN'T TELL WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN UNDER THESE SITUATIONS.

JUST LIKE HOW ALEX WAS TAKEN DOWN BY ME,
I'LL GET TAKEN DOWN IF I DON'T FIGHT BACK.
IF I LOSE HERE...
HAH!
IT'S THE END!!
IT'S NOT A LEVEL YOU SEE ON A 2ND ROUND REGIONAL PREFECTURE STAGE.
WOW!!
AMAZING RALLY!!
I SEE... MIYAGAWA'S DEFINITELY IN HIGH SPIRITS RIGHT NOW.
BUT WHAT I SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR IS THE THING THAT'S NOT GIVING AWAY ITS SERVICE ADVANTAGE, EVEN WITH 120% OF MIYAGAWA'S POWER...

HA!
RGH~
MARUO'S KEEPING POWER.

GAME, MARUO. 5 - 2, MARUO LEAD.
IT'S JUST ONE BREAK, SO IT'S NOT DECIDED YET!!
MARUO WILL TAKE DOWN A SEEDED PLAYER WITH JUST ONE MORE GAME!!

カキ
カキ
カキ

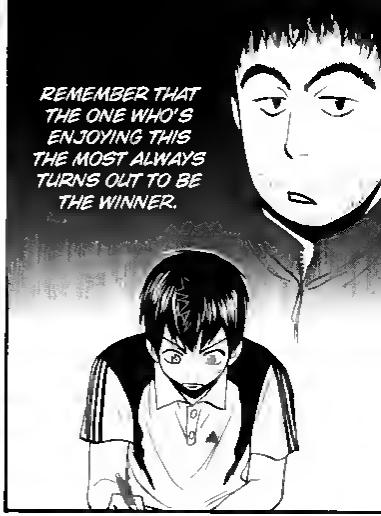

EVEN IF I CAN'T, AS LONG AS I KEEP MY NEXT SERVICE GAME, I CAN PULL OFF THE WIN!!
15-15
30-15
カキ
カキ
カキ
カキ
IF I BREAK, I'LL WIN THIS!!

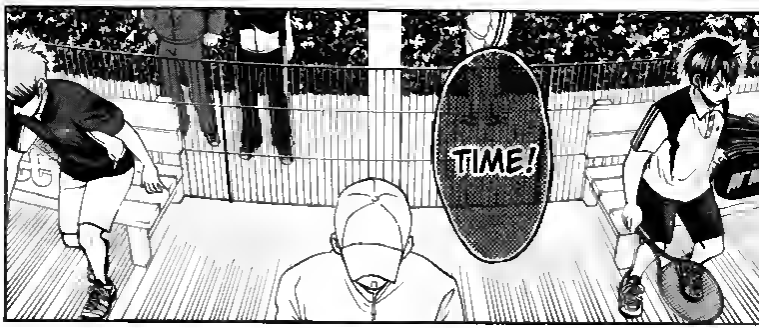
ドキッ

I CAN DO THIS!!

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO ENJOY A MATCH LIKE THIS...?
EVEN THOUGH I'M WINNING, I CAN'T RELAX FOR EVEN A MOMENT...

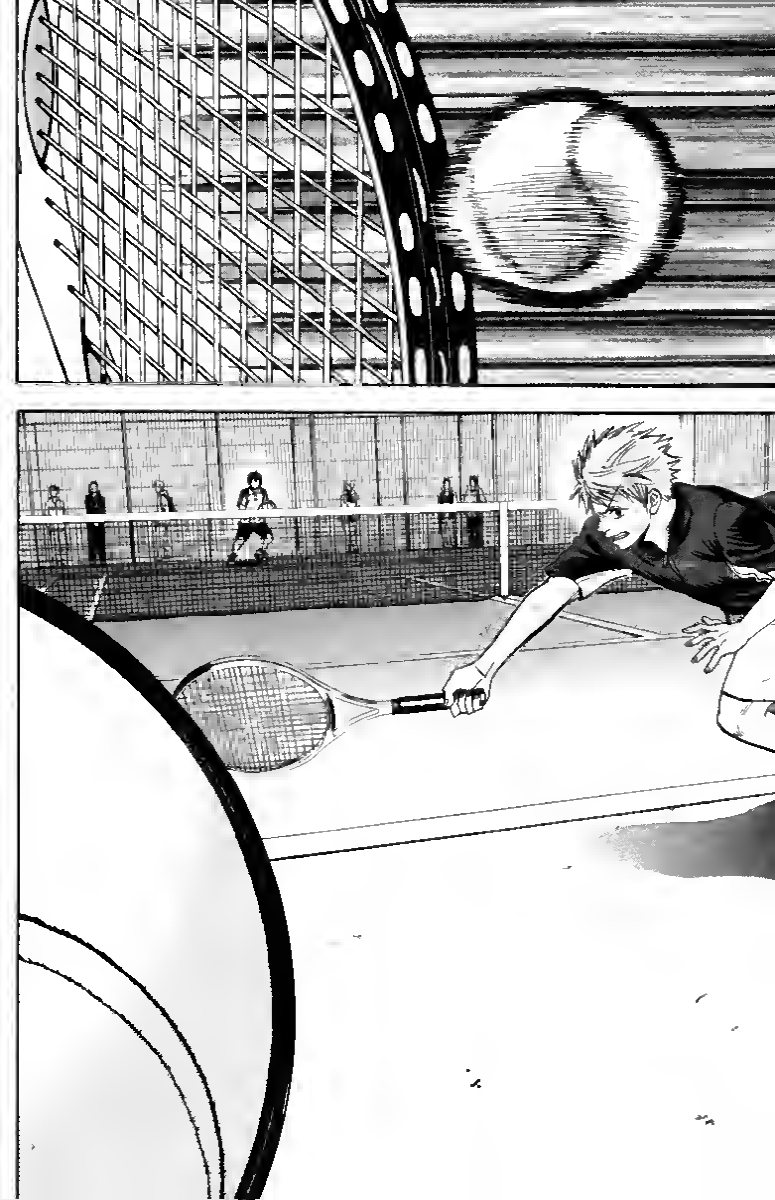
ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE, I CAN'T DO IT...


REMEMBER THAT THE ONE WHO'S ENJOYING THIS THE MOST ALWAYS TURNS OUT TO BE THE WINNER.


TIME!

15 - LOVE
15 - 15

30 - 40
30 - 30
MATCH POINT!!



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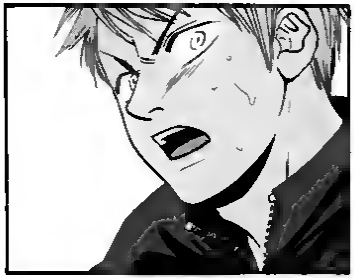
#111 FEAR



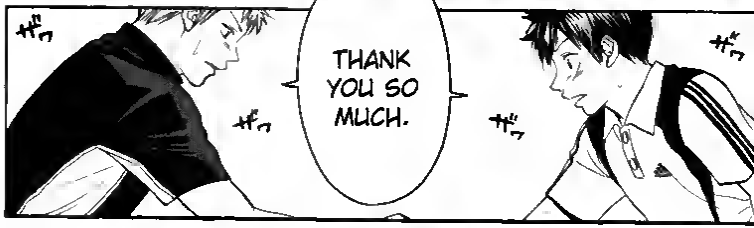
GAME,
SET,

AND MATCH WON BY MARUO.
COUNT: 6 - 2!!

THE 3RD SEED LOST!!
I WON ...!!
I WON... WITH MY OWN SKILLS!!
FOR REAL!! MARUO TOTALLY DOMINATED!!
AMAZING...!! MARUO GOT SUPER STRONG!!

HE DID IT!! NOW ANIKI'S QUALIFIED FOR KANTO, TOO!!
YES! HE DID IT!!
AWE-SOME, EI-CHAN!!

NO WAY! MIYAGAWA LOST?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT
IT'S AN UPSET


THANK YOU SO MUCH.

I TOTALLY LOST EVEN THOUGH I MANAGED TO PLAY MY VERY BEST TENNIS.
MY DRIVE VOLLEY GOT TAKEN DOWN, AND I LOST AFTER GETTING BROKEN TWICE.
IT'S YOUR UNDISPUTED VICTORY.

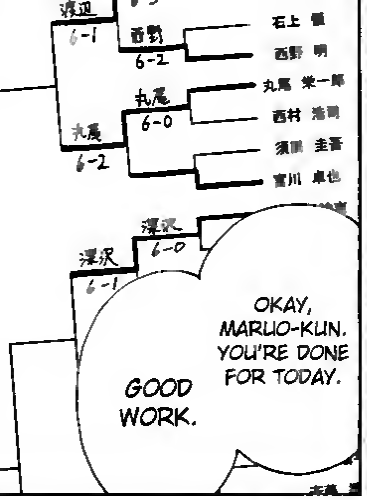
MIYAGAWA-KUN...
YOU'RE STRONGER THAN ME, MARUO-KUN.
AHH...
UMM, ARE YOU ALSO AIMING TO BE A PRO, MIYAGAWA-KUN?
PRO?
AHHHM, WELL, PROBABLY
HE'S NOT REALLY ENGINEER-ING.
AH... RIGHT.
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU ASKED ME LAST SUMMER WHETHER I'M AIMING TO BE A PRO, RIGHT?
HOW ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU AIMING TO BE A PRO, MARUO-KUN?

YUP.

MAYBE THAT WAS THE DIF-FERENCE BETWEEN US...
GOOD LUCK IN KANTO, TOO...

ザワ
ザワ
MYAGAWA-KUN MUST'VE BEEN PLAYING WITH THE SAME MIND-SET AS ME...
バシ
バシ
ザワ
ザワ
ザワ

I'LL GO AND REPORT TO THE OFFICE REAL QUICK.
GEEZ~~ YOU GOT THROUGH YOUR FIRST HURDLE A LOT FASTER THAN EXPECTED.
MARUO-KUN!! CONGRATULATIONS, IT WAS AMAZING.
AH... THANK YOU.
IS HE? ISN'T HE JUST TIRED?
ISN'T HE... A LOT CALMER THAN EXPECTED?
HUH?
...
HMMM..


渡辺
6-1
西野
6-2
石上 優
西野 明
丸尾
6-0
丸尾
6-2
丸尾 栄一郎
西村 浩司
須藤 圭吾
富川 卓也
深沢
6-0
深沢
6-1
OKAY, MARUO-KUN. YOU'RE DONE FOR TODAY.
GOOD WORK.

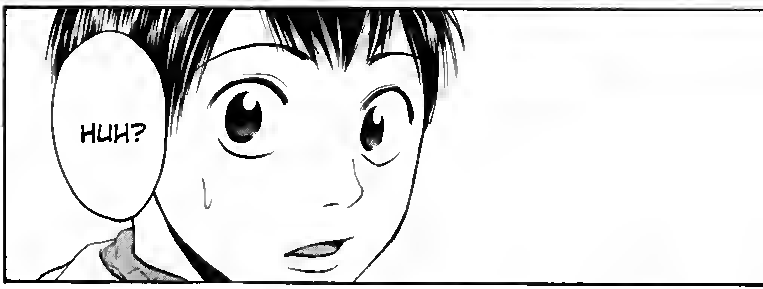
COURT NO.10, MARUO EIICHIRO. I WON 6 - 2.
ガヴ
ガヴ
prince

AND COURT NO.10, TAKASAKI NATSU WON 6 - 0!
AH... NACCHAN.
EHEHEHE~~

YOU BEAT MIYAGAWA-KUN WITH 6-2?
THAT'S INCREDIBLE!!
AND NEXT, THE 2ND ROUND WILL BEGIN.
BUT IT WASN'T AS EASY AS THE SCORE SUGGESTS.
ANYWAY, WE'RE BOTH ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR!!
YEAH.
HUH? YOU DON'T SEEM ALL THAT HAPPY.
EH? NO... THAT'S NOT TRUE. IT'S JUST...
...WHAT?
UMM... I CAN'T REALLY EXPLAIN IT PROPERLY, BUT...

SOMEHOW... UNLIKE BEFORE, IT WAS REALLY AGONIZING UNTIL I WON.
IT REALLY FELT LIKE MY LIFE WAS ON THE LINE...
SO THAT WAS THE SORT OF MATCH IT WAS.
I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT FEELING REALLY WELL.
BUT I'M SURE THERE'LL BE MORE MATCHES LIKE THAT IN THE FUTURE.
MORE AND MORE AS YOU WIN.
I SEE... NAC-CHAN MUST HAVE LOT OF EXPERIENCES LIKE THAT.
YOU MIGHT NOT FEEL IT YET BECAUSE IT JUST ENDED,
BUT I'M SURE YOU'LL REALIZE VERY SOON...
prince

THAT THE MOST ENJOY-ABLE MATCHES
ARE THOSE KINDS OF MATCHES.

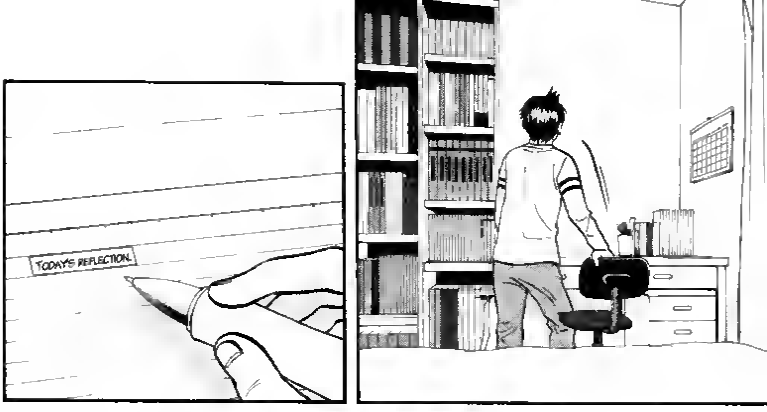

HUH?

AH, NACCHAN, HOW WAS YOURS?
DON'T BE GOING LOVEY-DOVEY OUT IN PUBLIC!
VICTORI-OUS~~~
WE WEREN'T !!
OHH, AS EXPECTED!!
HEEEEEY!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

ANYWAY, CONGRATULATIONS ON ADVANCING TO KANTO.
YOU DID WELL UNDER ALL THAT PRESSURE.
H... THANK YOU SO MUCH.
BUT, YOU HAVE NO TIME TO RELAX. YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?
IF YOU WANT TO SECURE YOUR VICTORY IN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR,
YOU FIRST HAVE TO WIN THIS PREFECTURE COMPETITION.
IN ORDER TO QUALIFY FOR THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR, YOU HAVE TO GET PAST THE 2ND ROUND OF THE KANTO JUNIOR.
TO ENSURE THAT, THE EASIEST WAY IS TO WIN THIS PREFECTURE COMPETITION AND BECOME A HIGH-RANKING SEEDER
SINCE YOUR KANTO RANKING IS STILL LOW, IT'S UNSURE WHETHER YOU'LL GET SEEDED, EVEN IF YOU TAKE THE 2ND PLACE.

YOU MIGHT NOT LIKE THE WAY THIS SOUNDS,
BUT IN ORDER TO BEAT THAT LEVEL FOR SURE, YOU NEED A BIT MORE TIME.
THIS IS THE MOST PRACTICAL ROAD MAP FOR ULTIMATELY WINNING THE NATIONALS.
IN OTHER WORDS, IF YOU LOSE, YOU CREATE THE POSSIBILITY OF GOING AGAINST THE NO.1 SEED, NABAE, IN AN EARLY ROUND.
!
YES.
I'LL GO, TOO~~~
JUST SO YOU KNOW, I'M ALSO GOING FOR THE TROPHY
IF ANIKI'S DOING IT, I'M GOING, TOO!
GUESS WE'LL GO BACK
YEAH ..
YES SIR!
SO, WE'LL GO BACK AND DO A BIT MORE PRACTICE!!

I'M HOME~
WELCOME BACK, EICHIRO.
HOW WAS YOUR MATCH TODAY?
I WON.
SOMEHOW I MANAGED TO ADVANCE TO THE KANTO COMPETITION.
OH... REALLY...?
KANTO... THAT'S AMAZING.
ISN'T THAT. SHOULDN'T YOU BE CELEBRATING MORE?
UMM... I'M TOO TIRED TODAY.
...
THAT BOY. I'M STARTING TO FEEL HE'S GOTTEN A LOT STRONGER THAN I IMAGINED.


TODAY'S REFLECTION

I REALIZED THE BIG GAP IN THE SCORE ONLY AFTER IT WAS ALL OVER.
I WAS ABLE TO BEAT MIYAGAWA-KUN...

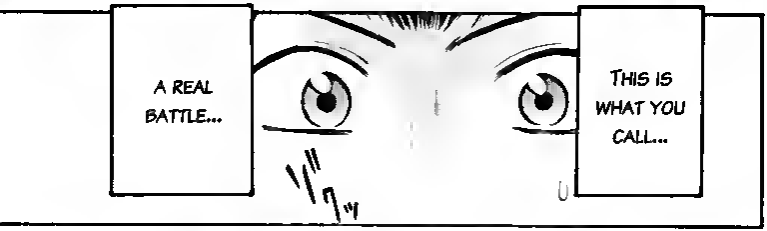
A CHILLY, FEAR-LIKE SENSATION KEPT TELLING ME I'LL LOSE IF I DROPPED MY FOCUS, EVEN FOR A SECOND.
ALTHOUGH I WAS ABLE TO FEEL THAT I WAS WINNING MIDWAY THROUGH THE MATCH, I WASN'T ABLE TO RELAX, EVEN FOR A MOMENT, TILL THE VERY END.

It's probably because Miyagawa-kun had his whole future riding on it.

I'm sure it was a match that couldn't be forsaken in order to advance forward.

That's why today's match might've been a match that changed Miyagawa-kun's future.

A match that could've changed my future.



A real battle...

This is what you call...

ANYWAY ...
New York
AH, OKAY!
EIICHIRO, DINNER TIME!!
KANAGAWA PREFECTURE JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION. VS MIYAGAWA TAKUYA
I'LL PROBABLY NEVER FORGET TODAY'S MATCH.
30-0
15-0

Early Designs

Baby Steps

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Baby Steps

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Galooza

Q-Checker:
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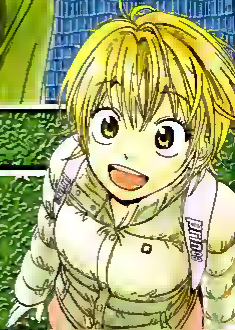
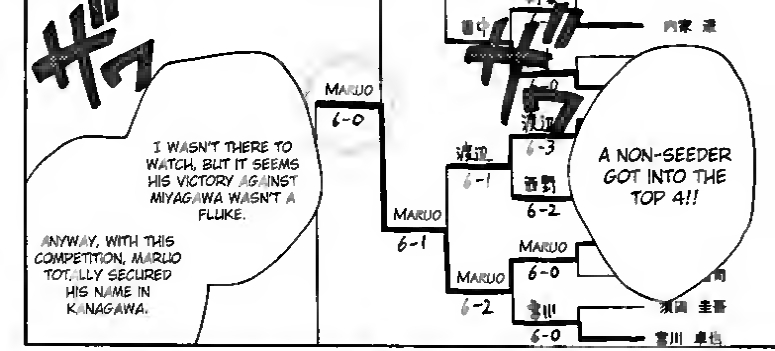


MALE PLAYERS WHO HAVE THE 10 O'CLOCK SLOT FOR THE 3RD ROUND, PLEASE REPORT TO THE MAIN OFFICE
KANAGAWA JUNIOR TENNIS COMPETITION, DAY 2
#112 MATCH-UP?

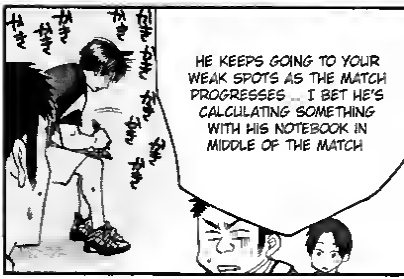
3RD ROUND, VS WATANABE KEN, 14TH SEED
RGH~

HA!
GAME, SET, AND MATCH WON BY MARUO. COUNT: 6 - 1.
ALRIGHT!

4th Round, VS Kishi Teppei, 5th Seed
RGH~
GAME, SET, AND MATCH WON BY MARUO. COUNT: 6 - 0.


I WASN'T THERE TO WATCH, BUT IT SEEMS HIS VICTORY AGAINST MIYAGAWA WASN'T A FLUKE.
ANYWAY, WITH THIS COMPETITION, MARUO TOTALLY SECURED HIS NAME IN KANAGAWA.
MARUO
6-0
MARUO
6-1
MARUO
6-2
6-1
6-3
6-2
6-0
A NON-SEEDER GOT INTO THE TOP 4!!

EVEN THOUGH HE DOESN'T SEEM THAT POWERFUL, EXCEPT FOR HIS SERVES.. I FEEL LIKE I GOT CHEATED.
AND NOT ONLY ARE HIS SHOTS SUPER ACCURATE, HE KEEPS ATTACKING NON-STOP.


HE KEEPS GOING TO YOUR WEAK SPOTS AS THE MATCH PROGRESSES ... I BET HE'S CALCULATING SOMETHING WITH HIS NOTEBOOK IN MIDDLE OF THE MATCH

HE'S DEFINITELY GOT THE SKILL WORTHY OF BEATING MIYAGAWA...

DAY 3, SEMI FINALS. VS MOGAMI NORIHIKO, 2ND SEED

HIS BACKHAND SLICE IS POWERFUL, AND IT'S THE MAIN INITIATOR OF HIS OFFENSE...
BUT SINCE THERE'S A HABIT, I CAN USE THAT AGAINST HIM TO START MY ATTACKS!!
HA!
A CROSS!!
HA!

RGH~
GAME, SET, AND MATCH WON BY MARUO.
COUNT: 6-3, 6-2.
HE EVEN COMPLETELY DOMINATED MOGAMI, WHO I LOST TO YESTER-DAY
MARUO WON AGAIN!!
HOW IN THE WORLD DID HE GET SO STRONG?

EVER SINCE THAT MATCH, I FEEL LIKE SOMETHING CHANGED SIGNIFI-CANTLY.
HEY, HEY!! YOU ACTUALLY GOT ALL THE WAY TO THE FINALS!!
INCREDIBLE, MARUO-KUN!!
I THINK WIN-NING AGAINST MIYAGAWA-KUN WAS A HUGE STEP FORWARD.
EVEN THOUGH YOU USED TO ALWAYS LOSE BY THE 3RD ROUND... REALLY, WHAT HAPPENED?
THE FINAL IS AGAINST ARAYA, AS EXPECTED.
6-0
6-2
SINCE THAT'S THE CASE, YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE THAT THE NEXT ONE WON'T BE AS EASY, RIGHT?
JUST SO YOU KNOW, IT'S ALL BEEN ACCORDING TO PLAN. SO FAR, AT LEAST.
COACH AOI.

ゴク
.....
AND HE'S ALSO AN OPPONENT YOU'VE LOST TO ONCE BEFORE..
MOREOVER, HE'S AN OPPONENT YOU MUST BEAT IN ORDER TO SECURE A SEED POSITION IN KANTO,
IN OTHER WORDS, HE'S A HIGHER LEVEL OPPONENT THAT YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST OVERCOME BY SUMMER.
A PRO-CANDIDATE WHO'S A REGULAR IN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR..
— UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.
YOU CAN WIN...
BASED ON MY PREDICTIONS,
IF YOU HAVE TIME TO WORRY, GO BACK AND PRACTICE!!
YES SIR!
UMM... SORRY, BUT CAN YOU PLEASE NOT BE SO PESSIMISTIC ALL OF A SUDDEN?
You were all optimistic just a second ago
DON'T BLAME ME.. IT'S PRETTY MUCH HOW IT IS.

WOW~ YOU'RE AT IT ALREADY!
AH... NAC-CHAN. GOOD WORK.
LET'S DO OUR BEST TOMORROW!
YEAH IT'D BE GREAT IF WE CAN BOTH WIN

AOI-KUN, CAN YOU COME HERE FOR A SEC?
WHAT IS IT, COACH SAKAKIBARA?
IF YOU'RE ASKING ME ON A DATE YOU CAN TAKE YOUR TIME LATER.
NO!!
YOU'RE PRETTY FAMOUS AMONGST THE FEMALE PLAYERS.
For a non-seeded player getting to the finals.
DON'T PUT SO MUCH PRESSURE ON ME!!
ALRIGHT!! NOW, MARUO AND NATSU!
YES?
YOU TWO GO START A MATCH ON COURT A.

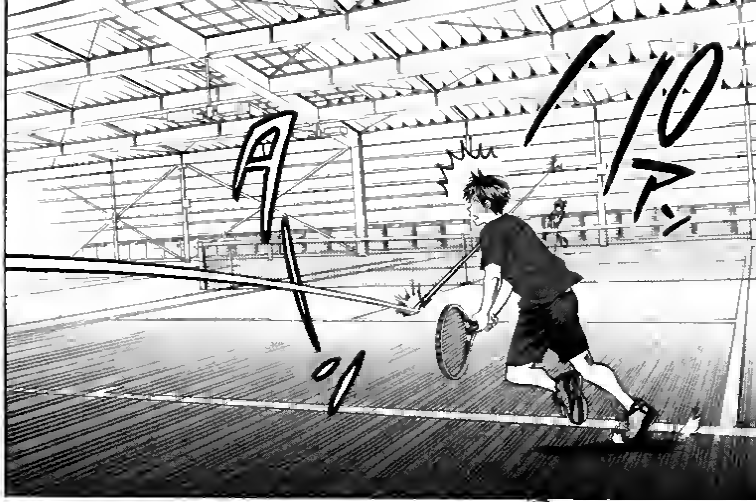
HUH!?
YOU KNOW.... I'M PLAYING ARAYA-KUN TOMORROW.
W-WHY AGAINST NACCHAN... OR AGAINST A GIRL IN THE FIRST PLACE?
IT'S TRUE THAT YOU DON'T HAVE MANY MIXED MATCHES ON COURT A, BUT THIS IS A SPECIAL EXCEPTION.
I KNOW, I KNOW.
WE AREN'T TELLING YOU TO DO IT AS A JOKE.
FOR NACCHAN, IT'LL BE A COUNTER-MEASURE FOR SHIMIZU AKI AT THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR
SINCE YOU BARELY HAVE ANY COMPETITION IN KANTO RIGHT NOW, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIGHT AGAINST A HIGH-LEVEL OPPONENT THESE DAYS, RIGHT?
AND MARUO-KUN'S CONTROL-TENNIS IS SOMEWHAT SIMILAR TO SHIMIZU-SAN'S STYLE, TOO

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
THERE WERE OFTEN TIMES WHEN I HOPED YOU'D BE ABLE TO BE LIKE NATSU DURING MATCHES.
FOR MARUO, SIMPLY PUT, IT'LL BE MENTAL TRAINING.
OF COURSE, THEY'RE BOTH SPECTACULAR CHARACTERISTICS, SO I'M NOT TELLING YOU TO CHANGE,
NATSU'S AN INTUITIONIST.
IF MARUO'S A THEORIST,
YOUR STYLES ARE REALLY THE POLAR OPPOSITES OF EACH OTHER.
WELL, DON'T BE SO SKEPTICAL AND JUST TRY IT~
Sounds fun right?
ぽれぽれ
OKAY...
THAT'S WHY
BUT WHEN I WATCH YOU PLAY, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I WISH YOU'D BE ABLE TO PLAY MORE INSTINCTIVELY

I CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.
BACK IN FLORIDA, THERE WAS ONE TIME WHEN MY BODY MOVED REALLY INSTINCTIVELY AND I WAS ABLE TO PLAY SURPRISINGLY GOOD TENNIS.
I REALLY DO WISH I COULD DO THAT CONSCIOUSLY.
OH~?
UMM, SHOULD I PLAY LIKE I USUALLY DO?
AHH, THAT'S RIGHT. ALTHOUGH IT'S ONLY FOR ONE SET, PLAY LIKE YOU NORMALLY DO
WAIT, WHAT'RE YOU SAYING, EI-CHAN?
ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY THAT GIRLS DON'T STAND A CHANCE IF BOYS PLAY SERIOUSLY?
N-NO!! I'VE NEVER PLAYED A GIRL, SO I WASN'T SURE WHAT TO DO.
NATSU, IT'S OKAY FOR YOU TO LOSE, SO JUST FOCUS ON OBSERVING HOW MARUO STRATEGIZES HIS PLAYS.
HEY! EVEN COACH AOI IS ASSUMING I'LL LOSE?
THAT'S NOT FAIR!

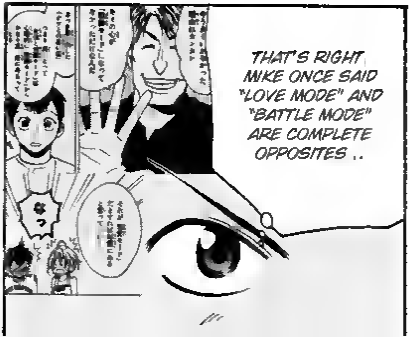
ズッ
WE AREN'T THAT DIFFERENT IN HEIGHT.
AND I'VE BEEN WATCHING EI-CHAN CAREFULLY EVERYDAY, SO I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU.
IF YOU THINK YOU'LL BEAT ME THAT EASILY, YOU'RE WRONG!
HER REASONING MAKES ZERO SENSE...

A
OKAY THEN. ONE SET MATCH, PLAY!
I'M READY! OKAY, WHICH SIDE?
EH...? AH, THE TOP.
SEE! MY SERVE THEN.
Y-YES SIR!
KEEP IT TOGETHER!
Stay true



EVEN IF SHE'S TOP IN THE NATION, DON'T YOU LOSE TO A GIRL NOW!
WHAT'RE YOU DOZING OFF FOR!?
I-IT'S A LOT FASTER THAN I IMAGINED...
Stupid

SEE, ACE!
15 - LOVE.
ビシッ


THAT'S RIGHT MIKE ONCE SAID "LOVE MODE" AND "BATTLE MODE" ARE COMPLETE OPPOSITES ..

IT'LL BE DISRESPECTFUL TO NACCHAN, AND I'M GONNA RUIN THE PRACTICE AT THIS RATE
SHOOT... I CAN'T GET IN THE GAME AT ALL.

ALRIGHT...! IMAGINE I'M PLAYING AGAINST NABAE-KUN RIGHT NOW.
MY OPPONENT ISN'T A GIRL.... BUT THE NATIONAL TOP CLASS MALE PLAYER!!
THE HIGH WALL THAT I MUST OVER-COME...
THE GREATEST OPPONENT THAT I NEED TO BEAT...
NATIONAL NO.1, NABAE YUU!

HA!
30 - LOVE.
MAYBE THIS WASN'T SUCH A GOOD IDEA AFTER ALL...?
IS IT REALLY OKAY FOR ME TO BE DOING THIS?
...LIKE THAT'S POSSI-BLE!!
stay true

Baby Steps

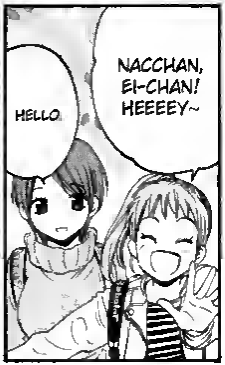
NEXT IS A SPECIAL CHAPTER THAT WAS RELEASED IN MAGAZINE SPECIAL 2010 ISSUE NO.3

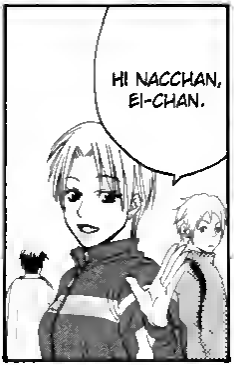
Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ Special

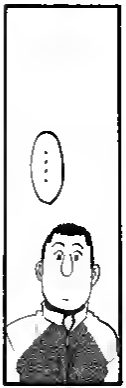
A STORY THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TENNIS WHATSOEVER.
THIS STORY HAPPENED ABOUT A YEAR AFTER MARUO EIICHIRO STARTED TENNIS.
LET'S HAVE FUN TO-GETHER!
AH! EI-CHAN, WE'RE IN THE SAME CLASS.
TAKASAKI-SAN!
YEAH, LET'S MAKE THIS A GREAT YEAR.

After school, at STC.

Ah... it's Nacchan and aniki!
Yo!


Nacchan, Ei-chan! Heeeey~
Hello.


Hi Nacchan, Ei-chan.

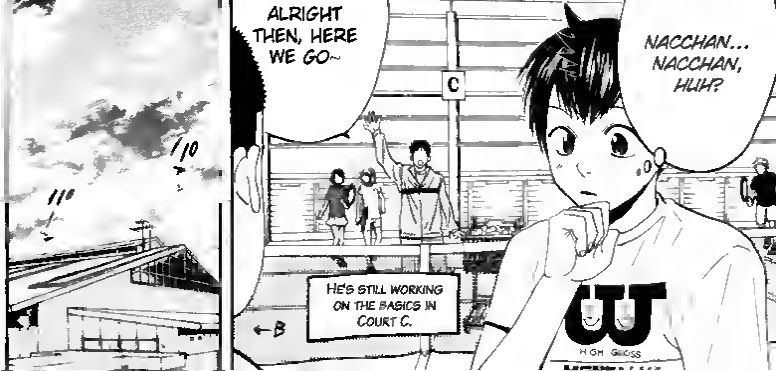

...

Kageyama asked if he can see them.
Yup. I have'em here.

Ah, that's right Takasaki-san,
Do you have the notes you borrowed yesterday?

HEY, ANIKI... WHY DO YOU CALL NACCHAN BY HER FAMILY NAME?
EH!?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHY... THAT'S WHAT I CALL HER AT SCHOOL, AND...
WELL, THERE'S NO PARTICULAR REASON...
Is it weird?

ISN'T NAC-CHAN FINE? YOU GUYS ARE CLOSE ANYWAY.
Isn't it hard to say it? Everyone's calling her Nacchan anyway—
UMM, I'M NOT SURE ABOUT CHANGING IT ALL OF A SUDDEN.
AND IT'S A BIT... EMBAR-RASSING...


NACCHAN... NACCHAN, HUH?
ALRIGHT THEN, HERE WE GO~
C
HE'S STILL WORKING ON THE BASICS IN COURT C.
←B

EI-CHAN, YOU'RE STILL NOT GOING BACK YET?
YEAH. I WANNA STAY A BIT LONGER.
THEN...
はっ
I SEE. WELL, DON'T OVERWORK YOURSELF
YEAH. THANKS
I KEEP ON LOSING AT THE 3RD ROUND, SO I WANT TO TRY PRACTICING MORE.
!
GOOD WORK, NACCHAN!

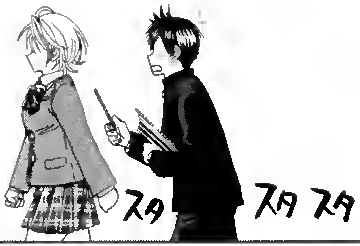
SEE YOU TOMORROW.
YUP! GOOD WORK!
I WAS ABLE TO SAY IT NATURALLY!!
ALRIGHT! THAT WAS NATURAL...
NICE JOB, EI-CHAN
Alright, here I go!
ANIKI DID WELL!!
NEXT DAY, AT SCHOOL.
キーン
コーン
カーン
コーン

OH, TAKASAKI. YOU'RE ON DUTY TODAY.
AH, TAKASAKI-SAN, THE TEACHER'S CALLING YOU~
TAKASAKI-SAN, GOOD MORNING~
HEY, TAKASAKI-SAN
AH... THERE YOU ARE.
YUP... THIS FEELS MORE NATURAL AT SCHOOL.
HERE THE TEACHER ASKED ME TO RETURN THIS

U-UMM... TAKASAKI-SAN?
HEY... HUH? WAIT...
TAKASAKI-SAN..
EH...WHY? I'M PRETTY SURE SHE HEARD ME...
WHAT SHOULD I DO? SHE'S DEFINITELY IGNORING ME... BUT WHY!?

WHICH ONE IS IT?
YES?
IF YOU KEEP ON SWITCHING, I'LL GET CONFUSED.
AH... IS THAT SO...

Special Chapter.
THE END.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Baby Steps

Hello everyone, this is Katsuki
Thank you so much for reading Volume 12.

The 4-koma in the right is the one that was in magazine Special and the theme was "encounter"
I like the phrase "Stranger is a friend you have yet to encounter."
The reason Omake pages for this volume were mostly on Yuuichi was because I felt bad for treating him so terribly during his appearances in the main story...
I really like Yuuichi. Cause he's easy to draw
Not being able have a single match on display even though he has a significant impact on Ei-chan's development...
Please look forward to his (bright) appearances in later chapters.

Well then, see you next Volume

講談社コミックス　四二八三巻
ベイビーステップ⑫
2010年4月16日　第1刷発行
定価はカバーに表示してあります

N.D.C. 726　185p　18 cm

著者　勝木光
発行者　清水保雅
発行所　株式会社講談社
東京都文京区音羽二―一二―二一
（郵便番号一一二―八〇〇一）
編集部（03）五三九五―四五九
販売部（03）五三九五―三六〇八

印刷所　株式会社フォーネット社
製版所　株式会社二葉写真製版
製本所　株式会社フォーネット社

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ISBN978-4-06-384283-8　Printed in Japan